‘NOT IN MY NAME’ STIR

Not in my name. That was the message that went out from Kashmir on Wednesday, with people pouring into the streets to protest against the terror attack in Pahalgam. Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir witnessed a shutdown. This marks the deadliest attack in the Valley after the Abrogation of Article 370.

2,000 TOURISTS, YET NO SECURITY IN BAISARAN

Serious concerns have been raised over the lack of security in Pahalgam’s Baisaran Valley. Aaj Tak reported that the picturesque ‘mini-Switzerland’, a meadow surrounded by pine forests and mountains, had zero security at the time of the attack while 2,000 people picnicked there. While Pahalgam is known for its heavy military presence, Baisaran itself lacks security cover. The nearest security units, the 3rd battalion of the Army’s Rashtriya Rifles & the 116th CRPF battalion, are located 11kms away. The remote valley is only accessible by foot or horseback, making rapid deployment difficult.

J&K NEWSPAPERS GO BLACK

J&K newspapers printed their front page black to protest Pahalgam terror

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www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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KASHMIR SHUTS DOWN AFTER 35 YRS

Locals hit the streets as the deadliest attack after Abrogation of Article 370 leaves the Valley reeling

India suspends Indus Treaty, shuts Attari border, cancels visas to Pak, asks nationals to leave in 48 hrs

Bharat will not bend to terror. The culprits of this dastardly terror attack will not be spared

AMIT SHAH, HOME MINISTER

The terrorist attack was a premeditated plot. This is failure of the Central Intelligence Agency to have not known in advance about such a heinous and large-scale act. There was a failure of intelligence information in the previous Pulwama incident, and even now the same type of incident has recurred

SIDDARAMAIAH, CM

We strongly condemn the attack. China firmly opposes all forms of terrorism. We mourn for the lives lost and express sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and the injured

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY

K’taka arranges spl flight for 40 stuck in Kashmir

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said more than 40 Kannadigas tourists are stranded in Kashmir after the terrorist attack. He instructed the authorities to arrange a special flight to bring all of them safely back to the state.

He also announced a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each to the families of those killed. Two people from Karnataka are among those killed. He spoke to Pallavi, wife of Manjunath Rao of Shivamogga, and Sujatha, wife of Bharat Bhushan of Mathikere in Bengaluru.

Bodies of the deceased accompanied by their family members are scheduled to be brought back. “For any help, please call 112 -- our officers are working with J&K authorities to ensure your safety and immediate support.,” he added. *—PTI*

Union Home Minister Amit Shah pays his last respects to 27 people killed in the Pahalgam terror attack, in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir; Locals hold ‘Not In My Name’ protests in Anantnag **PHOTOS: PTI**

SRINAGAR, 24 APRIL

For the first time in 35 years, the Kashmir Valley observed a complete shutdown on Wednesday in protest against a terror attack that killed at least 26 people, mostly tourists, at Baisaran meadows in Pahalgam, Anantnag district.

The bandh, supported by major political parties, religious groups, trade bodies, and civil society organisations, led to the closure of shops, businesses, and fuel stations across Sri-nagar and other district headquarters. While essential services continued, public transport was scarce, and private schools remained shut. Government schools stayed open, but Kashmir University postponed all exams scheduled for the day.

The Jammu and Kashmir government has announced an ex-gratia of 10 lakh for the fami-lies of those killed in the attack. Security has been intensified across the Valley with checkpoints, frisking, and heavy deployment at tourist locations and city entry points.

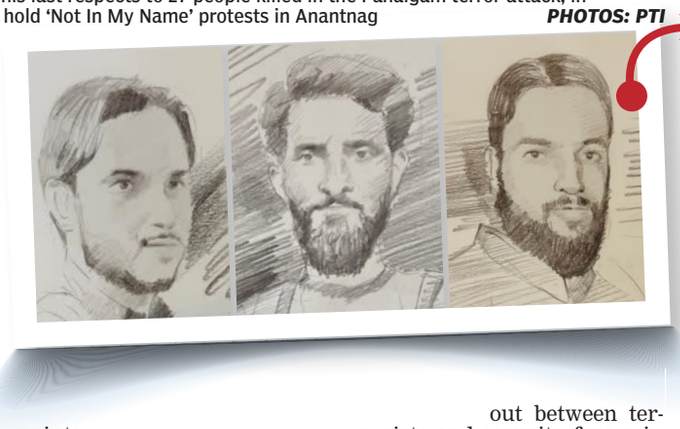
Political parties including the National Conference, PDP, Peoples’ Conference, and Apni Party backed the shutdown. Mutahida Majlis Ulema, led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, also appealed for a peaceful bandh in solidarity with the victims. The Private Schools’ Association of J&K and major trade bodies like the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce also joined the call.

A large-scale search operation is underway in Baisaran to track the attackers. Meanwhile, a gunfight broke out between terrorists and security forces in Kulgam district during a cordon and search operation in Tangmarg area. No casualties have been reported so far.

Intelligence agencies had earlier warned of a possible attack targeting non-locals in South Kashmir. Earlier this month, encounters were reported in Kishtwar and Udhampur, where three terrorists were trapped, but only one was killed.

Tensions remain high as the region reels from the deadliest attack in years. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3 & 5



SKETCHES OF SUSPECTS RELEASED

Security agencies released the sketches of three men suspected to be involved in the terror attack. The men, all three Pakistanis, are Asif Fauji, Suleman Shah and Abu Talha, officials said. They had code names — Moosa, Yunus and Asif — and were involved in terror related incidents in Poonch.

2 TERRORISTS KILLED IN BARAMULLA

Srinagar, 23 April : Two terrorists were killed on Wednesday as an infiltration bid was foiled along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir’s Baramulla, officials said. The Army said the infiltration bid was foiled in Uri Nala of the north Kashmir district. Large quantity of weapons, ammunition and other war-like stores have been recovered from the terrorists, it said, adding, the operation is in progress. The infiltration bid came less than 24 hours after Pahalgam attack.

India downgrades diplomatic ties with Pakistan

New Delhi, 23 April

India on Wednesday suspended the Indus Water Treaty and announced downgrading diplomatic ties with Pakistan including expulsion of its military attaches in view of cross-border links to the Pahalgam attack.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The CCS also decided to close the Integrated Check Post at Attari with immediate effect, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said.

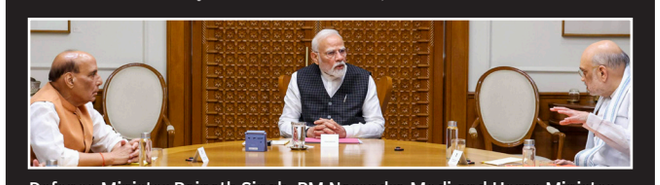
Pakistani nationals will not be permitted to travel to India under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) and any such visas issued in the past to Pakistani nationals are deemed cancelled.

Any Pakistanis in India on such visas will also have to leave the country within 48 hours. Misri said, “The defence, military, naval and air Advisors in the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi are declared Persona Non Grata.” They have a week to leave India in 7 days.

India will be withdraw its own defence, navy and air advisors from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad. Five support staff of the Service Advisors will also be withdrawn from both High Commissions.

The strength of the High Commissions will be brought down to 30 from 55 by 1 May. It resolved that the perpetrators of the attack will be brought to justice and their sponsors held to account,” he said.

“As with the recent extradition of Tahawwur Rana, India will be unrelenting in the pursuit of those who have committed acts of terror,” he said. *—PTI*



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah chair a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security in New Delhi on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Pakistan says we’re not responsible for attack

ISLAMABAD, 23 APRIL

Hours after the terrorist open fired in Pahalgam, Pakistan distanced Islamabad from the attack, with its defence minister Khawaja Asif describing the violence as “home-grown” and part of a wider rebellion against India.

“Pakistan has no connection with this. There are revolutions in so-called Indian states, from Nagaland to Kashmir, in Chhattisgarh, Manipur, and the south. These are not acts of foreign interference but local uprisings,” he said.

“These are people asking for their rights. Hindutva forces are repressing minorities, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and people are reacting,” he said.

Days earlier, Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir described Kashmir as Pakistan’s “jugular vein,” triggering a sharp response from New Delhi. “Our stance is very clear, it was our jugular vein, it will be our jugular vein, and we will not forget it. We will not leave our Kashmiri brothers in their heroic struggle,” Gen Munir ha said.

THE TERRORISTS & THEIR WEAPONS

4 terrorists

opened fire with American-made M4 carbine assault rifles and AK-47s.

50-70 used cartridges

recovered from site of attack.

Forensic analysis said the attackers were equipped with advanced communication devices.

The terrorists were clad in camouflage outfits.

Top LeT man mastermind behind Pahalgam attack?

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Intelligence agencies claimed Saifullah Kasuri, also known by the alias Khalid, a senior commander of the Pakistan-based terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), is the mastermind behind the massacre.

Saifullah Khalid is said to be operating from Gujranwala, Pakistan, sources said.

Two other operatives based in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) are also believed to have played key roles in orchestrating the assault.

The attackers are believed to be members of The Resistance Front (TRF), an offshoot of LeT.

Kasuri was the president of Milli Muslim League (MML), the political front of Hafeez Saeed’s Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), In the past, Khalid had slammed the Pakistani government’s decision to scale back LeT’s operations in Kashmir, attributing it to escalating violence in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ARMY FORCES SLASHED BY 1L: GEN BAKSHI

Retired Major General GD Bakshi hit out at the government, saying insufficient Army recruitments is one of the reasons behind the Pahalgam terror attack. He said, “During Covid 19, the recruitment in Army was stopped for three years. The forces were cut down by more than 1 lakh people.”

He added India needs more personnel for “Bangladesh, which is pain in the neck now in addition to Pakistan and Chine”.

KARNATAKA HELPLINE NUMBERS:

080-43344334
080-43344335
080-43344336
080-43344342

BJP WORKERS THRASH SCRIBE IN KATUA

Rakesh Sharma, a journalist from Dainik Jagran, was allegedly assaulted by BJP workers during a protest at Kalibari Chowk in Kathua. The reporter was thrashed after he questioned a BJP leader about possible gov-ernment and intelligence failures in Pahalgam attack. Sharma was admitted to Government Medical College. “They’re attacking everyone who demands accountability online, and now they’re doing it on the ground,” said a fellow journalist.

CM & DKS receive death threats

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday received death threat emails, prompting a high-level police investigation.

The email was allegedly sent by an individual identifying himself as “Sindar Rajput.” In the message, he threatened to kill both leaders and claimed their bodies would be stuffed inside a refrigerator and a trolley bag.

The sender stated he had loaned Rs 1 crore to a man named Prabhakar from Rampura and that the money had not been repaid. He alleged that the money is currently kept at the residences of Prabhakar’s wife and parents.

Dy CM DK Shivakumar & CM Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: PTI**

In the email, Rajput demanded that Prabhakar be forced to return the money immediately, warning that failure to do so would result in harm to Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar

He further claimed that Prabhakar had no source of income to repay the amount. Initially planning to kill Prabhakar, Rajput wrote that he had now shifted his threats towards Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar.

Following the threat, an FIR has been registered, and police have launched a manhunt to trace the sender. *—Agencies*

SPITTING NOT ALLOWED

Metro to fine passengers for tobacco use

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) on Wednesday announced that passengers found consuming chewable tobacco-based products within Metro premises and trains will be fined.

For this, the BMRCL will strengthen its patrolling efforts during non-peak hours, it said.

According to the BMRCL, this step has been taken to address public grievances about passengers using chewable tobacco-based products and to avoid consequent spitting and littering.

Since possession of such substances cannot be detected through metal detectors, BMRCL said it has de-cided to implement random physical pat-down checks at all metro stations.

“While platform security guards will be sensitised to look out for such passengers, the central security surveillance room has already been instructed to monitor passenger behaviour and alert the concerned platform security staff immediately upon noticing any violations. Enhanced surveillance will now be car-ried out on all trains and metro stations, and guilty passengers will be fined as per BMRCL rules,” it said in a statement. Additionally, BMRCL will launch extensive awareness campaigns. *—PTI*

Davanagere to hold 'Constitution Saviours' protest

DAVANAGERE, 23 APRIL

Over 10,000 volunteers are expected to gather for the "Constitution Saviours' Convention" on 26 April, organized by civil society forum Eddelu Karnataka and over 100 pro-people organizations. The event aims to launch a grassroots movement to protect constitutional rights and challenge anti-people policies. The forum blames both BJP and Congress for continuing corporate-friendly, divisive governance and calls for a citizen-led transformation. A youth bike rally covering 20 districts will culminate in Davanagere on 25 April. Eminent figures like Nadoja Baraguru Ramachandrappa, Prakash Raj, Jignesh Mevani, Parakala Prabhakar, and others will participate. The initiative seeks to build a one-lakh strong "Constitution Protection Force" across Karnataka over the next three years. Citizens are urged to join this "Constitution Festival." —*Salar News*

Drunk man falls into drain, dies in Kollegal

MYSURU, 23 APRIL

A 45-year-old agriculture labourer died after falling into a drain under the influence of alcohol at Madhuvanahalli near Kollegal taluk, police said on Wednesday. The decomposed body of the man was found on Tuesday evening after a foul smell started to emanate from the drains. Based on tattoo marks on his hand, Police identified the deceased as Lingaraju of the same locality. The police have handed over the body to his relatives after conducting the post-mortem examination. Kollegal rural police have registered a case and started an investigation —*Salar News*

Woman held for selling illegal liquor pouches

MYSURU, 23 APRIL

Kollegal rural police have arrested a woman near Madhuvanahalli in Kollegal taluk for the possession of illegal liquor pouches. The police said the accused has been identified as Mangalamma, a resident of Rangada Beedhi of Madhuvanahalli.The police had received complaints that the woman bout liquor pouches from shops at Kollegal taluk and sold them at her village. There were also complaints of such illegal sales in a few other small shops at Madhuvanahalli, sources said. A team led by Sub Inspector Supreeth conducted a raid and caught the women with the pouches in her possession. Police recovered 78 pouches of 90ml liquor from her. —*PTI*

IIA invites applications for PhD programme

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

The Indian Institute of Astrophysics in Bengaluru has invited applications for its PhD programme, being offered in collaboration with University of Calcutta (CU) and Pondicherry University. The research areas include exoplanets, extragalactic astronomy, gravitation and cosmology and astronomical instrumentation. The deadline for sending in the application is 16 May In the case of integrated MTech-PhD in astronomical instrumentation, candidates can register for the PhD programme after successful completion of the MTech programme. The integrated programme is offered in collaboration with CU's department of optics and photonics. IIA is an autonomous institute under the Union government's Department of Science and Technology devoted to research in Astronomy, Astrophysics and related fields of Physics. It has observation and space facilities at various locations in India —*PTI*

Terrorists shot B'luru man for 3 minutes

Family says he was told to put his baby down before being shot in front of wife

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Two families from State were left grief-stricken after the terror attack in Pahalgam on Tuesday, which claimed 26 lives.

Bharath Bhushan from Bengaluru, who was visiting Pahalgam with his wife and three-year-old son, was shot dead by terrorists. His wife, Sujatha, and their child survived the attack.

According to Vimla, Sujatha's mother and a resident of Mattikere in Bengaluru, Bharath was killed in front of his wife and son.

She added that once Sujatha realised her husband was dead, she picked up his identity cards and fled the scene with her son.

"My son-in-law was carrying the baby. They made him put the baby down and then shot him. They kept shooting him for three minutes, it seems. They didn't stop until he was dead. They shot him in the head."

In Shivamogga, Roopa, sister of Manjunath Rao — another victim of the attack — said this was the family's first trip outside the state.

According to her, a friend of Manjunath called at around 4.30 pm. to inform her that he had been hospitalised. "But we came to know of his death through the news," she said.

Roopa said her brother had travelled to Pahalgam with his wife and son. Speaking to PTI Videos, Manjunath's brother-in-law Ashwin recalled that the deceased was known for his generosity. "He was very sociable. If anyone needed help, Manjunath would always step forward. .

Urging all those from the state who are now in Jammu and Kashmir to remain calm, he said the Karnataka government has swiftly deployed teams and sent Minister Santosh Lad to assist on the ground. —*PTI*

Bharath Bhushan from Bengaluru, who was visiting Pahalgam with his wife and three-year-old son, was shot dead by terrorists on Tuesday. His wife, Sujatha, and their child survived the attack ***PHOTO: SALAR***

State Youth Congress holds candle vigiin Bengaluru to pay tribute to the Pahalgam victims; AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, AICC spokesperson Pawan Khera, Cong Chief Mallikarjun Kharge and DyCM DK Shivakumar during a press conference on Wednesday ***PHOTO:MOHAMMED ASAD***

'Pahalgam attack intelligence failure'

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said that the Pahalgam terror attack was a glaring security and intelligence failure and demanded that the Centre should locate the terrorist outfits behind the incident and neutralise them mercilessly.

"What surprises me the most is the fact that we have a very strong military intelligence network in the country. They have done some very good job on many occasions. The moot question here is why the intelligence failure happened and how and from where the terrorists reached there," Parameshwara said.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge termed the Pahalgam terror attack a direct assault on the Indian state and said that in this moment the entire nation is one with the government to fight the terrorists. He urged the government to use all its strength to hunt down the terrorists.

"Very unfortunate incident happened in Pahalgam in Jammu-Kashmir and the terrorists dastardly killed innocent and unsuspecting tourists yesterday around 2:30 pm" Kharge said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar offered condolences to the family members of Manjunath who was killed in the terror attack. In a telephone call with Manjunath's brother-in-law Dr Ravikiran this morning, he said, "The government is with you in this difficult time and we share your sorrow. We will extend all support needed, be brave." —*PTI*

Yadgir family escapes terror attack in Kashmir, seeks airlift

YADGIR, 23 APRIL

A family from Yadgir had a narrow escape during the recent terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, confirmed Prabhakar, a resident of Rangampet in Surpur, through a video message.

Prabhakar, who is also a software professional based in Bengaluru, was on a vacation in Kashmir with his wife Maheshwari and their two children when the attack occurred. All four managed to flee the scene safely after hearing gunfire. "We ran from the spot in panic and managed to move about 7km away. We're currently staying at a lodge and are safe," Prabhakar said in the video. The family is now en route to Srinagar. Prabhakar appealed to the government for assistance, saying, "If airlifts are arranged, it would be convenient for us to return to Bengaluru."

The incident has heightened concerns among tourists and raised fresh questions over security arrangements in the region. —*Salar News*

FARMERS IN DESPAIR

River Krishna dries up as M'rashtra does not release water

BELAGAVI, 22 APRIL

The Krishna River, lifeline of North Karnataka, is nearly dry weeks ahead of its usual summer depletion. Traditionally reaching critical levels by mid-May, the river is already parched by the third week of April, intensifying the water crisis across 13 districts in the Kittur and Kalyana Karnataka regions.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah wrote to his Maharashtra counterpart, Devendra Fadnavis, on 2 April, requesting the release of 3 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) of water, 2 tmcft from the Koyana reservoir and 1 tmcft from Varana reservoir. However, as of 20 April, Maharashtra has not responded.

From 2004 to 2014, Maharashtra released 3 tmcft of water annually to Karnataka, charging Rs 2 crore per tmcft. In 2015, both states entered a barter agreement, exchanging water instead of money. Under this arrangement, Karnataka would supply 3 tmcft from the Tubachi-Babaleshwar Lift Irrigation Project to Maharashtra's Jat taluk in Solapur district, in return for the same quantity from Koyana and Varana reservoirs during April and May.

Water management expert Ashok Chandargi noted that in 2016, Maharashtra proposed Karnataka supply 4 tmcft annually to Jat, via a 30km underground pipeline. Karnataka agreed to bear the project's estimated cost of Rs 300 crore, now escalated to Rs 1,000 crore, but did not sign the formal agreement. This has stalled the water exchange mechanism.

Krishna River ***PHOTO: PTI***

Adding to Karnataka's grievances, Chandargi recalled the 2019 floods when Maharashtra, citing heavy rainfall, suddenly released 8 lakh cusecs of water from Koyana into the Krishna. The unannounced release devastated crops and property worth 35,000 crore across Belagavi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, and Yadgir districts. This led to the formation of a joint coordination committee to ensure better communication on future releases.

Currently, Koyana reservoir holds 42 tmcft against its 105 tmcft capacity, and Varana contains 14 tmcft of its 34 tmcft capacity.

As the river continues to dry and with no response from Maharashtra, millions of people and vast stretches of farmland remain at risk. —*PTI*

Quarry owner shoots protester

C'BALLAPUR, 23 APRIL

A villager sustained bullet injuries when a quarry owner fired at him during a protest at Kanaganakoppa village in Manchenahalli, Chikkaballapur taluk, on Wednesday.

The incident took place when Kanaganaguppa villagers, led by Ravi, protested against the laying of a road straight to a crusher site. The road was supposed to pass through some of the agricultural lands.

The villagers were protesting for the past few days against the alleged illegal construction of the road, and it took an ugly turn on Wednesday when crusher owner Sakalesh arrived at the site along with earth moving equipment for laying of the road.

A heated exchange took place between Sakalesh and the protesting villagers. He alleged that someone hurled stones at him and he opened fire at the protestors. As Ravi fell down, hit by the bullet on his knee, Sakalesh started assaulting him. The crusher site is situated about 1km from the village. There are two temples in the vicinity, and setting up a crusher at the site would pose threat to the temple, said Ravi. Villagers said a prominent politician belonging to BJP holds the licence to operate the crusher, and they had leased out the same to Sakalesh who hails from Bengaluru. —*Salar News*

TOYS & GADGETS

Rs 2.5 cr worth of fake goods seized from Flipkart warehouse in City

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

D The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on Wednesday announced that during a search and seizure operation at the largest warehouse in South India, operated by Instakart Services Private Limited which is trading under the name Flipkart, it was found that the firm was allegedly storing and selling products that violated the quality control orders issued by the central government and the BIS Act, 2016.

The estimated market value of the seized items is around Rs 2.5 crore, it said.The operation, conducted on 22 April by the BIS's City Branch Office, revealed that several product models seized from the premises were not licenced, misused the ISI mark and registration mark, and violated the terms and conditions of the BIS license.

"Some of these products fall under the Compulsory Registration Scheme (CRS), while others are subject to Mandatory Certification by BIS, in accordance with the QCOs. These orders mandate that no product shall be manufactured or sold without a valid BIS license and compliance with the relevant Indian Standards," said a BIS statement. According to the BIS, approximately 104 varieties, comprising around 17,500 units—including wireless earbuds, Bluetooth earphones, speakers, toys, footwear, cables, and more—were found in violation and seized.

The BIS urged consumers to always verify the BIS Standard Mark (ISI mark). —*PTI*

SC uses Art 142 to protect M'luru students

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday invoked Article 142 of the Constitution to protect 250 students from facing hurdles in education due to the shifting of their institute's campus.

Article 142 empowers the top court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing "complete justice" in any case or matter pending before it.

The bench dealt with a matter related to a property in Mangaluru from where a hotel management institute was running.

A settlement required the institute to vacate the property on or before 30 April. The institute's counsel said

an incomplete campus prevented the appellant from permanently moving to a new location as was required under the rules of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

The appellant, therefore, approached the court to issue appropriate directions to the AICTE and the Mangalore University to permit them to shift to a temporary location for two years, as it had all other facilities required for academic excellence.

The bench noted that since the appellant has been running the institute since 2004, the AICTE and Mangalore University should not insist on compliance with the requirement of the appellant shifting its institute to a place which is either owned by it or for which the lease for over 30 years exists. Affiliation would be granted to the institute for two years in a premise where it would temporarily relocate.

The institute was ordered to complete the new location within two years and moved there before 30 April, 2027. —*PTI*

GROWING NEET ASPIRANTS

Govt urges NMC to increase medical seats

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Expressing concern over the widening gap between the number of NEET aspirants and available medical seats, the State government on Wednesday urged the National Medical Commission (NMC) to significantly increase undergraduate medical seats across the country.

Addressing the graduation ceremony at the Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical College and Research Institute, Minister for Medical Education Sharan Prakash Patil said over five lakh students appear for the NEET examination every year, but only around one lakh medical seats are available.

Government plans to set up medical colleges with hospitals, cancer care units, trauma centres and super-specialty hospitals in all districts ***PHOTO: X***

"There is a stark mismatch between demand and availability. The NMC must intervene," he said. NMC chairperson BN Gangadhara was present at the event. A formal proposal has already been sent to the NMC seeking approval for an additional 800 undergraduate and 600 postgraduate medical seats in Karnataka starting this academic year. Satet government also plans to establish medical colleges with hospitals, cancer care units, trauma centres and super-specialty hospitals in all districts of state. NMC chairperson bn Gangadhara highlighted global shortage of nearly three crore doctors and encouraged younger generation to take up medical careers.

"Indian doctors are in great demand worldwide, thanks to their strong academic foundation and English proficiency. One of our goals is to produce globally recognized medical professionals," he said. *PTI*

MM Hills to host Cabinet meeting after 25 years

MYSURU, 23 APRIL

The Chamarajanagar district administration has completed preparations for a special cabinet meeting atop MM Hills on 24 April, the first since the district's formation 25 years ago. A German-style tent has been set up behind Vajramale for the meeting, to be chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at noon.

He is expected to announce plans to develop MM Hills along the lines of Tirupati, boosting religious and eco-tourism.

All 34 cabinet ministers will attend, with over 500 police el deployed for security.

Development projects to be launched include Rs 22 crore museum, Rs 45 crore Dasoha

Bhavan with a 4,000-seat dining hall, Rs 20 crore guesthouse, Rs 9.5 crore bus shelter, Rs 9 crore welcome arch at Kollegal, housing.ed sanitation facilities.

The CM will stay overnight and on 25 April, unveil a statue of Basavanna in Chamarajanagar and inaugurate a Kuruba community hall. Panchayat elections in parts of Gundlupet have been postponed to facilitate the event. —*Salar News*

The tourists had come to have a good time here and they were sent back in coffins. A poor labourer had left home to earn but died

-Omar Abdullah, J&K Chief Minister

The terrorists indis-criminately killed innocent people after asking their religion. We strongly condemn this. (But) this is also an intelligence failure

-Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM President

Instead of making hollow claims on the situation being normal in Jammu and Kashmir, the government should now take accountability and take concrete steps that such barbaric incidents do not happen

-Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

We strongly condemn this heinous act. Let me reaffirm Bangladesh's resolute stand against terrorism

-Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh Chief Adviser

People carry the mortal remains of Adil Hussain Shah, the pony rider who was killed in the terror attack at Pahalgam, during his funeral, in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

RAJNATH VOWS 'STRONG RESPONSE' TO TERRORISTS

Says India will track down the attackers and conspirators

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday declared that those behind the "cowardly terrorist attack" in Pahalgam, which killed 26 people—mostly tourists—will receive a "strong response." Calling the massacre "extremely inhuman," Singh said India will track down both the attackers and those who conspired behind the scenes.

This was the first clear signal of India's possible retaliation following the deadly strike in south Kashmir. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also said that "Bharat will not bend to terror" and assured that the perpetrators "will not be spared."

Before his statement, Singh chaired a high-level security review meeting lasting over two hours, attended by NSA Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, and Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh. Singh directed the armed forces to enhance combat readiness and intensify anti-terror operations. Gen Dwivedi provided a detailed update on deployment and ground situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Commenting on cross-border terrorism, Singh said, "History is witness to the withering away of nations not due to the action of the adversary, but due to the result of their own misdeeds. I hope people across the border look at lessons of history more closely."

He added that India, with its long civilization and scale, cannot be intimidated by such acts.

Amit Shah rushed to Srinagar on Tuesday night, met survivors and the victims' families, and assessed the ongoing security measures.

Singh also emphasised self-reliance in defence, highlighting India's progress in domestic manufacturing with examples like Tejas, Dhruv, Prachand, Akash, and BrahMos. He praised the growing role of the private sector in strengthening defence capabilities. *—PTI*

90% bookings cancelled: Delhi travel agencies

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Several travel agencies in Delhi said on Wednesday said that nearly 90 per cent bookings for Jammu and Kashmir have been cancelled by tourists.

"The moment the news of the terror attack broke, we started receiving calls for cancellations," Dev, owner of Kusha Travels, said.

Since some bookings, especially for flights and hotels, are non-refundable, it is creating a real mess for the tour agencies, Kartik Verma, a travel agent from Good Guide Tours and Travels said, adding that during this time of the year, Kashmir is among the most sought-after destinations for families.

"They are saying they cannot risk taking their loved ones to a place where there is a chance that they might not return," he added.

Another travel agency, AJ Tours and Travels, said they have been instructed to stop taking further bookings for Jammu and Kashmir. *—PTI*

Police and security personnel stand guard outside the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Delhi tightens security

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

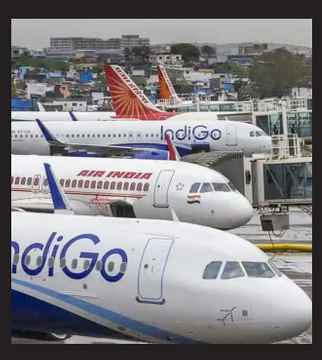
Security was tightened around New Delhi following the attack. Police ramped up checking around tourist hotspots and border checkpoints. Security arrangements outside the Pakistan High Commission have been tightened. "We have deployed additional forces from CAPF and police outside the High Commission of Pakistan. No one will be allowed to breach law and order here", an official said.

Additional personnel have been deployed at Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Humayun's tomb, Lodhi garden, Purana Kila and India Gate among others, he added.

Police are also carrying out surveillance through drones and foot patrolling in areas such as Sadar Bazar, Chandni Chowk, Connaught Place, Sarojini Nagar and others. *—Agencies*

DGCA asks airlines to increase Srinagar flights

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL



Aviation watchdog DGCA on Wednesday asked airlines to increase the number of flights from Srinagar to facilitate the return of tourists.

Besides, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has requested the carriers to consider waiving cancellation and rescheduling fees for Srinagar flight tickets.

"In this regard, the airlines are advised to take swift action to increase the number of flights in response to heightened demand and also to ensure uninterrupted connectivity from Srinagar to various destinations across India, facilitating evacuation of stranded tourists," the DGCA said in an advisory.

According to the advisory, airlines have also been asked to provide all necessary assistance to tourists facing unexpected circumstances and challenges during this difficult time.

Air India and IndiGo are operating additional flights from Srinagar on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the civil aviation ministry has asked airlines to ensure there is no surge in airfares on the Srinagar route. *—PTI*

SC condemns attack, pays 2-minute tribute

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed anguish and strongly condemned the heinous terrorist attack.

Judges and the lawyers in the apex court paid tributes to victims by observing a moment of silence.

In a full court meeting held on Wednesday morning, the top court unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the act of terror, the apex court said in a statement.

"This diabolical act of mindless violence has shaken the conscience of all and is a stark reminder of the brutality and inhumanity that terrorism unleashes."

To honour the memory of the victims and express solidarity with their families, the apex court judges, advocates, court staffers, and all others present in the top court aside from its registry observed a two-minute silence at around 2pm when the courts assembled in the post-lunch session.

In a related act of solidarity, lawyers and over 300 members of the Supreme Court Bar Association assembled in the apex court's lawn and payed tribute. *—PTI*

Jharkhand man held for post on terror attack

BOKARO, 23 APRIL

One person was arrested in Jharkhand's Bokaro district on Wednesday after he allegedly uploaded a controversial social media post regarding the Pahalgam terror attack, a police official said. Md Naushad purportedly praised Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Taiba for the terror strike on X.

"He was arrested from Millat Nagar under the jurisdiction of the Balidih police station," said Naveen Kumar, the officer-in-charge. *—PTI*

HIGH ALERT IN BIHAR AHEAD OF MODI'S VISIT

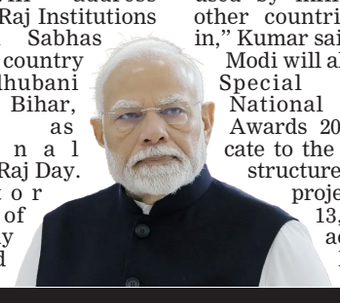
PATNA, 23 APRIL

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Bihar on Thursday, a high alert was sounded across the state following the terror attack.

Modi will address Panchayati Raj Institutions and Gram Sabhas across the country from Madhubani district in Bihar, observed as National Panchayati Raj Day. Director General of Police, Vinay Kumar, said that security around vital institutions and tourist attractions in Rajgir, Bodhgaya, Patna has been enhanced.

"The state shares a long, porous boundary with Nepal, which has been often used by infiltrators from other countries to sneak in," Kumar said.

Modi will also confer the Special Category National Panchayat Awards 2025 and dedicate to the nation infrastructure and welfare projects worth Rs 13,500 crore, according to PIB. *— PTI*



COURAGEOUS PONYWALLAH

Omar hails hero who died trying to save tourists

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah consoles the father of Adil Hussain Shah, a pony ride operator who was killed, in Anantnag district on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

PAHALGAM, 23 APRIL

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah offered 'fatiha' to a 30-year-old 'ponywallah', who was among the deceased, and hailed his courage to stand up against the armed assailants.

The 'ponywallah' (pony ride operator), Syed Adil Hussain Shah, was laid to rest at the ancestral graveyard at his Hapatnard village in Pahalgam with hundreds of mourners bidding him a tearful adieu and saluting his sacrifice.

"I visited Pahalgam today to offer 'fatiha' (prayer after burial) for brave-heart Shah, who was shot dead while trying to snatch a weapon from one of the terrorists in a courageous attempt to protect the tourists he had ferried on horseback from the parking area to Baisaran meadow. Adil (Shah) was the sole breadwinner, and his extraordinary bravery and sacrifice will forever be remembered," the Chief Minister wrote on X. He assured the family of the deceased that his government would take care of them.

Syed Naushad, younger brother of Shah, said he had gone to Pahalgam for work.

"He used to take tourists on pony rides to Baisaran. A tourist whose father was killed told me about the heroic act of my brother at SMHS hospital," he said, adding the terrorists hit Shah thrice with bullets in the chest.

Shah's sister Asma said, "In the morning, I told him not to go as if I knew something bad was going to happen. But he did not listen to me and left."

Shah's father, Syed Haider Shah, said he was devastated by his son's killing. "He was young and kind among all the siblings. Many boys from this village go to Pahalgam to find some work but who knew this was going to happen," the grieving father said. *—PTI*

VICTIMS OF TERROR

Navy officer was on honeymoon

Married just a few days ago, 26-year-old Indian Navy officer Lieutenant Vinay Narwal was holidaying with his wife Himanshi Narwal in Pahalgam. She's salutes his body in the pic above. From Bhusli village in Karnal, Narwal's family was living in Karnal city. Narwal's neighbour Seema recalled that the entire neighbourhood was celebrating the wedding. "They were planning a honeymoon in Switzerland, but decided to go to Kashmir due to the leave he had... We can't imagine what his family is going through," she said.

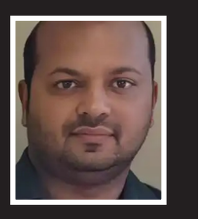
LIC officer asked to recite Kalima before being shot dead

Terrorists who targeted tourists in Pahalgam asked an LIC manager from Indore, who belonged to the Christian community, to recite the 'Kalma' before shooting him dead, his relatives claimed on Wednesday. Sushil Nathaniel, 58, who had gone to Jammu and Kashmir with his wife, daughter and son to cel-ebrate Easter, was among the 26 persons killed in the terror attack on Tuesday.

Slain Odisha tourist had saved money for months for family trip

Prashant Satpathy, 41, of Odisha's Balasore district, who was gunned down by terrorists in front of his wife and nine-year-old son in Baisaran meadow, had saved money for months for their Kashmir trip. Upon hearing the news of her son's death, Satpathy's mother has turned mute, his elder brother Su-shant said. He was an accounts assistant with the Central Institute of Plastics Engineering and Technology (CIPET) in Balasore. A video sent by Prashant to his elder brother from Baisaran meadow hours before his death showed him playing with snowballs and hurling ice packs at his son Tanuj and wife Priya Darshani Achariya. He was also seen hugging Tanuj, wearing a red jacket. "This was probably the last hug to his son by Prashant," the elder brother said. Prashant was the second of the three sons of their parents. "Prashant was shot in the head while we were alighting from a ropeway in Baisaran... he collapsed on the spot. The army came an hour later," his wife Priya Darshani Achariya told an Odia news channel. Satpathy's father-in-law Radhamohan Acharya said: "My son-in-law was a noble-hearted person. He had never harmed anyone. This is something not acceptable."

3 victims from West Bengal



Three tourists from West Bengal, Bitan Adhikari and Samir Guha from Kolkata and Manish Ranjan (pic.) from Purulia district, were among those killed in the Pahalgam terrorist attack on Tuesday. Describing it as a "grim hour" for the state, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednes-day said that her government was making all arrangements to get family members of the victims back home from New Delhi.

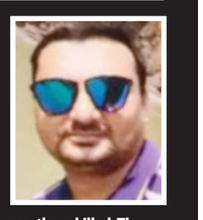
Dubai CA was among victims

Slain Neeraj Udhwani, 33, and his wife Ayushi of two years were holidaying in Pahalgam when tragedy struck. Udhwani was working as a chartered accountant (CA) in Dubai. He visited Jaipur for a wedding function and went to J&K on Monday. Neeraj was scheduled to return to Dubai after the trip. Neeraj's mother Jyoti said, "The terrorist should be hanged."

Elderly tourist from Kerala was shot in front of daughter

Sixty-five year old Ramachandran's love for travel ended in tragedy on Tuesday when terrorists in Pahalgam gunned him down in front of his daughter who had come down from Dubai to meet her parents. Ramachandran had travelled to Kashmir with his wife, daughter and grandchildren for a family holiday. He was shot dead by terrorists in front of his daughter, family sources said here on Wednesday.

3 Gujarat natives killed



Three tourists hailing from Gujarat were among those killed. Shailesh Kalathiya (pic) from Surat, Yatish Parmar and his son Sumit Parmar from Bhavnagar were the victims. Kalathiya, 44, belonging to Chikuwadi area in Surat city, shifted to Mumbai a few years back after he was transferred there. "He had gone to Pahalgam with his wife and two children, who are safe," Surat disaster management department's rev-enue officer Sajid Merujay said. Yatish Parmar and his son Smit Parmer were also among those killed. They were among 19 people from Bhavnagar who went to Kashmir to attend religious preacher Morari Bapu's discourse there.

IAF Corporal from Arunachal was posted in Srinagar

An Indian Air Force Corporal, hailing from Arunachal Pradesh, was one of the victims. Corporal Tage Hailyang was visiting Pahalgam with his wife. Corporal Hailyang was posted at the Indian Air Force base in Srinagar.

Close escape for AIR announcer, 3 from Thane dead

Kishori Waghulade, a casual announcer with All India Radio (AIR) in Maharashtra's Jalgaon city visited Pahalgam with her friends. As they stood captivated by the natural beauty of Baisaran meadows, gun-shots rang in the air turning the place into a site of carnage. She said the army acted fast, as they hid tourists in vehicles and ambulances. "I must have done something good in life, that's why I am still alive," she told her husband after surviving the terror attack. Some others weren't so lucky. Hemant Joshi, Sanjay Lele (pic), 44, and Atul Mone, 52 all hailing from Dombivli in Maharashtra's Thane district, died in the attack.

JS Chandramouli	(Vishakhapatnam)	Santosh Jaghda	(Maharashtra)
Sudeep Neupane	(Nepal)	Manju Nath Rao	(Karnataka)
Dinesh Agarwal	(Chandigarh)	Kastuba Ganbotay	(Maharashtra)
Madhusudan Somisetty	(Andhra Pradesh)	Bharat Bushan	(Bengaluru)

Shubham Dwivedi (UP)

M'rashtra family saved by hotel staffers

A five-member family from Buldhana district in Maharashtra was about to step out for local sightsee-ing, but was stopped by the owner and staff of their hotel from going out amid the terror attack. Nilesh Jain's brother Arun Jain, who is a journalist in Buldhana, said his two sons were accompanying his brother, the latter's wife and their daughter on the Jammu and Kashmir tour.

Court notice to Swiggy, Zepto on access to disabled

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Delhi High Court has issued notices to Swiggy, Zepto, and the Central government following a petition filed by NGO Mission Accessibility, claiming the apps are inaccessible to visually impaired users. Justice Sachin Datta directed the quick commerce platforms and the Centre to respond within four weeks. The NGO argued that, despite a legal requirement since 2019, the apps are not compatible with screen reader software, making it difficult for the blind to use. Citing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the plea stated that it violates constitutional rights and human dignity by denying equal access to essential services such as food delivery and grocery shopping. The matter is scheduled for a hearing on 28 May. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

FTII, SRFTI granted deemed-to-be university status

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, and the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), Kolkata, have been granted deemed-to-be university status under Section 3 of the UGC Act, the Ministry of Education announced. This allows both institutions to award degrees, launch doctoral and research programmes, and participate in the NIRF Rankings and Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), in line with the National Education Policy 2020. FTII is located on the former premises of Prabhat Studios and was fully integrated with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1974. SRFTI, founded in 1995 and named after filmmaker Satyajit Ray, currently offers postgraduate courses in film and digital media. This status will promote greater autonomy, innovation, and academic excellence in Indian film and media education. *—PTI*

UP man arrested for 'raping' 15-yr-old Dalit girl

SULTANPUR, 23 APRIL

Uttar Prasedh police have arrested a man for allegedly raping a 15-year-old Dalit girl, an official said. The arrest followed a complaint by the girl's father, alleging that the accused, who lives in the same village, raped his daughter after wooing her over the phone for the last month. On Tuesday afternoon, the accused entered the house while the girl was alone and raped her, the complainant said. The girl's mother arrived during the assault and when she intervened, the accused allegedly used caste-based slurs and issued death threats. Sources said the girl's father arrived shortly and informed the police, who rushed to the spot and arrested the accused. Circle Officer Vinay Gautam said a case has been registered. *—PTI*

Madras HC junks TASMAC pleas against ED raid

CHENNAI, 23 APRIL

The Madras High Court on Wednesday dismissed petitions filed by the State government and the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), challenging the ED raids on the premises of the state-run liquor retailer in March this year. A division bench comprising Justices SM Subramaniam and K Rajasekar dismissed two writ petitions filed by TASMAC and one by the TN government. The bench directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to proceed with all further action under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). According to ED, it had found serious financial fraud involving distillery companies and bottling entities through generation of unaccounted cash and illicit payments. *—PTI*

Saudi to set up 2 oil refineries in India

Decision follows PM Modi's visit, which was cut short following Pahalgam terror attack

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

India agreed to work with Saudi Arabia to enhance the stability of global oil markets and to balance global energy market dynamics, according to a joint statement issued on Wednesday. India and Saudi Arabia will also collaborate on establishing two refineries and petrochemical projects in India.

The statement came after conclusion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia which was cut short following the terror attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam. The locations of the refineries have not been disclosed yet.

"The Indian side agreed to work with the kingdom to enhance the stability of global oil markets and to balance global energy market dynamics. They agreed on the importance of enhancing cooperation in several areas in the energy sector, including the supply of crude oil and its derivatives," the joint statement said.

The two sides emphasised the importance of cooperation in the field of green and clean hydrogen, including stimulating demand, developing hydrogen transport and storage technologies, exchanging expertise and experiences to implement best practices.

This was Modi's third visit to Saudi Arabia. It followed the visit of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to India in September 2023 to participate in the G-20 Summit and co-chair the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council. *—PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in Jeddah *PHOTO: PTI*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETING

- Saudi Arabia and India to enhance cooperation in energy sector, including supply of crude oil and LPG.
- To complete Bilateral Investment Treaty negotiations at the earliest.
- Signed the MOU between Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and Communications, Space and Technology Commission of Saudi Arabia for cooperation in regulatory and digital sectors.

- Saudi Arabia to invest in India in multiple areas including petrochemicals, infrastructure, technology, fintech, digital infrastructure, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing and health.

Protesting WB teachers let SSC chief exit office

KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

Protesting jobless teachers, who laid siege to the state School Service Commission (SSC) headquarters here, on Wednesday allowed its Chairman Siddhartha Majumdar to leave his office after 40 hours.

Majumdar was scheduled to appear before the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday in a hearing related to the presentation of OMR sheets of the 2016 SSC recruitment test.

The agitators, who launched the demonstration at 2pm on 21 April, however, said their sit-in will continue.

One of the protesters belonging to the Deserving Teachers Forum said Majumdar was allowed to leave both because he had to be physically present at the court and also to give him some reprieve from confinement on health grounds.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Education Department questioned before the Calcutta High Court the maintainability of a contempt petition that claimed non-compliance of its order regarding 26,000 school jobs in the state.

The petitioners claimed that the education department has not uploaded OMR sheets of the 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staffers who lost their jobs on a Supreme Court judgment that upheld the high court's order with some modifications.

Additionally, Enforcement Directorate (ED) said it has attached assets worth more than Rs 609 crore as part of its money laundering investigations into three different teachers and staff recruitment scams in West Bengal.

The ED said a fresh order has been issued to attach the land parcels, commercial spaces, flats and villas worth Rs 56.50 crore in the case related to hiring by SSC for group C and D staff. *—PTI*

A MOMENT TO KEEP

US Vice President JD Vance, wife Usha Vance and their children visit the Taj Mahal in Agra on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Can't monitor assault on docs: SC

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to examine pleas seeking guidelines for protecting doctors from rising instances of assault. The bench said it cannot be expected to do everything and monitor each activity.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Prasanna B Varale, while referring to a top court verdict, said related guidelines were already laid down and the petitioners were at liberty to file appropriate proceedings.

"You cannot expect the Supreme Court to do everything and monitor each and every activity," the bench said.

When an advocate appearing for the petitioners referred to instances of assault on doctors, the bench said, "These are all very unfortunate incidents but the Supreme Court cannot monitor each and every incident sitting here."

The bench was hearing three pleas filed in 2022 alleging rising case of assault on doctors and sought framing of comprehensive guidelines for their protection.

One of the pleas sought a CBI probe into the alleged suicide of a gynaecologist in Dausa in Rajasthan.

The gynaecologist killed herself in Rajasthan after being allegedly harassed by a mob following the death of a patient during her delivery on account of excessive bleeding.

On Wednesday, one of the counsel appearing for the petitioners referred to the top court's 21 October, 2022 order issuing notice to the Centre and others seeking their replies on these pleas.

The bench said it had already laid down guidelines on the issue and "it was for the Parliament" to ensure that they were followed. "These are all policy matters," the bench said. *—PTI*

SC refuses to stay BPSC mains examination

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to stay the Bihar Public Service Commission mains examination scheduled for 25 April and rejected pleas alleging a paper leak. A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan dismissed a batch of petitions seeking the cancellation of the 70th BPSC Combined Competitive Preliminary Exams, citing a lack of conclusive evidence to justify a re-test for all candidates. *—PTI*

Choose between power and freedom, SC tells Balaji

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday told DMK leader V Senthil Balaji to make a choice "between post and freedom", warning him of cancelling bail if he did not step down as minister in Tamil Nadu.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih took exception to the fact that Balaji was reinstated as a state cabinet minister days after getting bail in a money laundering case related to the "cash-for-job" scam.

The bench cited its apprehension about Balaji interfering and influencing witnesses, while referring to a previous judgment which recorded that he forced people to withdraw complaints against him.

He was granted bail in September, 2024.

Balaji's counsel said there was no direct finding against his client.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the Tamil Nadu government, suggested that the trial could be shifted out of the state in case of possibility of influencing the witnesses, to which the court disagreed.

The top court posted the matter on 28 April.

Balaji previously said that his current post did not violate the bail terms. *—PTI*

SC seeks report on WB BJP leaders

New Delhi, 23 April

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the West Bengal government to submit a report on the status of investigation against BJP leaders Kailash Vijayvargiya, Arjun Singh and a few others in criminal cases against them. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan noted that the appeals were filed in 2020 and directed the state to file a comprehensive affidavit within a month and inform it about the stage of probe in the matter. The petitions sought the transfer of investigations. *—PTI*

SC calls for truce between BJP, Cong

New Delhi, 23 April

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha to amicably settle the defamation case lodged by the Congress lawmaker against the senior BJP leader. Congress leader Tankha has alleged that Chouhan, BJP state President VD Sharma and former minister Bhupendra Singh carried out a defamatory campaign against him by accusing him of opposing OBC reservation in the 2021 panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh. *—PTI*

NIA opposes Rana's plea to talk to kin

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday said jailed Mumbai terror attacks accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana might share crucial information if allowed to talk to his family members.

The NIA, appearing before a special court, made the submission to oppose Rana's plea for talking to family members.

The matter was at a crucial stage. The judge heard the argument and reserved the order for 24 April.

Rana moved an application through his lawyer, claiming it was his fundamental right.

The Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman, 64, was on 10 April sent to 18-day custody by a court. He was extradited from the US to India on 4 April.

The NIA alleged that Mumbai terror attacks main accused, David Coleman Headley alias Daood Gilani had discussed the entire operation with Rana before his visit to India.

Apart from sending an email to Rana detailing his belongings and assets, Headley also informed him about Pakistani nationals and co-accused Ilyas Kashmiri's and Abdur Rehman's involvement in the plot.

On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists carried out coordinated attacks on four different locations in Mumbai, killing 166 people and injuring many *—PTI*

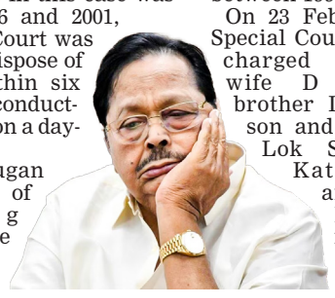
HC orders to book minister in DA case

CHENNAI, 23 APRIL

The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed a Special Court in Vellore district to frame charges in accordance with law against DMK General Secretary and Tamil Nadu Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan and his family members in a disproportionate assets (DA) case.

Justice P Velmurugan gave the directive while allowing the Revision petitions filed by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, challenging an order of a Special Court in Vellore discharging Duraimurugan and his family members from the case.

The judge said since the check period in this case was between 1996 and 2001, the Special Court was directed to dispose of the case within six months by conducting the trial on a day-to-day basis.



Duraimurugan is accused of amassing wealth to the tune of Rs 3.92 crore, disproportionate to his known sources of income, when he held the Public Works Department portfolio between 1996 and 2001.

On 23 February, 2007, the Special Court in Vellore discharged Duraimurugan, wife D Santhakumari, brother Durai Singaram, son and current Vellore Lok Sabha MP DM Kathir Anand and daughter-in-law K Sangeetha from the case filed in 2002. *—PTI*

EYES ON B'DESHIS & ROHINGYAS

SITs to probe infiltration into Delhi

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Police has registered six FIRs and constituted Special Investigation Teams (SITs) to probe a suspected larger conspiracy that involves facilitating the stay of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants in Delhi, officials said on Wednesday.

The move followed an internal directive issued by Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora on 6 March, which had outlined a coordinated operation across the Special Cell, Crime Branch, and Law and Order units, they said. According to the directive, the SITs were tasked with probing the alleged "mother conspiracy" behind the unlawful immigration network following the registration of FIRs.

A drive is to be undertaken against all persons who have, or are facilitating, illegal immigrants' entry into India, creating fake identity documents and address proofs, facilitating movement towards Delhi, arranging jobs and accommodation in Delhi, the order read.

It directed all district DCPs, Crime Branch, Special Branch and Special Cell to work on this by taking out data of approximately 151 illegal immigrants deported in 2024 and 2025.

Following this, the agencies had to submit their reports along with action taken to the Special Cell by 25 March.

According to the order, six FIRs had to be registered by 5 April utilising the draft of the "mother conspiracy" FIR, following which the probe will be taken up by constituting Special Investigation Teams of seasoned officer. *—PTI*

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora *PHOTO: PTI*

Methane leaks from GAIL Bhopal plant; no casualty

RAISEN, 23 APRIL

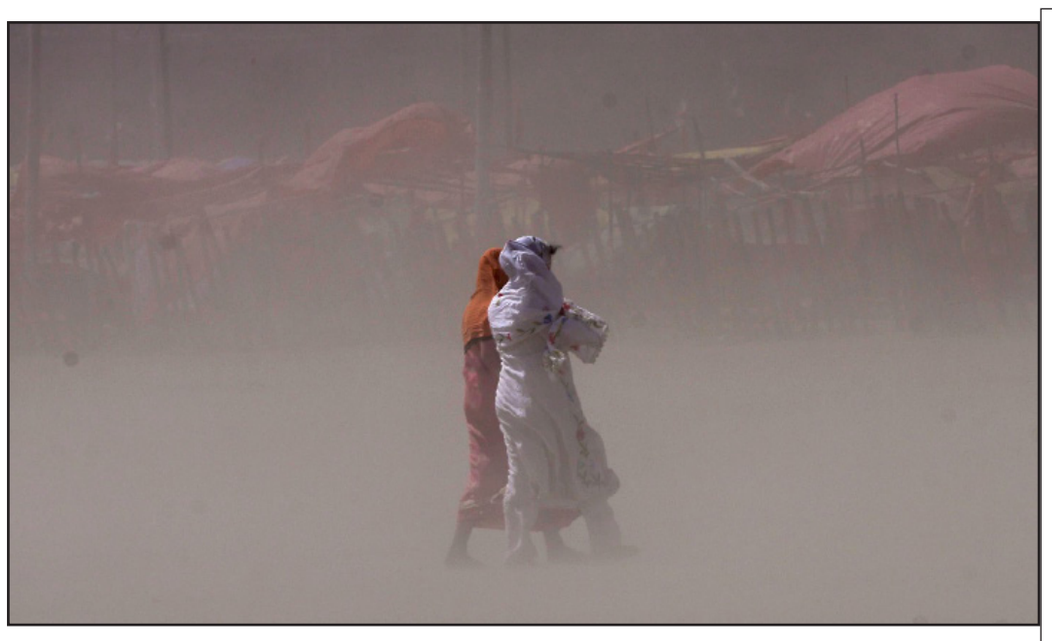
Methane gas leaked from a plant of state-owned utility GAIL in Mandideep industrial town in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district at around 2am on Wednesday, triggering panic in the area. The leakage, located close to state capital Bhopal, was later plugged and no casualty was reported.

Meanwhile, traffic on the road leading to the plant was temporarily stopped and production in 200 industrial units within its vicinity was immediately closed.

Methane is a highly flammable, colourless and odourless gas. There was leakage of methane gas, which blew away in the air. There has been no loss of life, an official said. All security arrangements were being checked.

Teams of government officials have been posted there since night to make comprehensive security arrangements in the GAIL plant.

Mandideep Industry Association chairman Rajiv Agrawal said there was a "level-3" gas leak in the GAIL plant. There has been no casualty and caution was being maintained. *—PTI*



DUST STORMS HIT UTTAR PRADESH

People brave a dust storm on a hot summer day on the banks of Sangam, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on Wednesday. Dust storm also known as sandstorm is when strong wind blows loose sand and dirt particles from dry surfaces. These can affect visibility and transportation. It can also cause serious health risks.
PHOTO: PTI

Travel industry panics after J&K terror attack

The Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives has triggered widespread panic in eastern India's travel industry, with tour operators reporting widespread cancellations of scheduled tours to Jammu and Kashmir.

Industry leaders in Kolkata, a key hub for travel to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), claimed that the incident could undo years of recovery and growth that followed a long period of militancy in the valley.

The attack marks the first time in recent memory that tourists were specifically targeted, heightening safety concerns among travellers.

"This is madness," said Bilolaksha Das, Chairman of the eastern chapter of the Travel Agents Federation of India.

"There had been terror attacks in Kashmir before. But never before were tourists identified and killed. The entire tourism industry and all its partners revolving around Kashmir, both in the valley and various parts of India, will go for a toss after this incident," he said.

Das told PTI that tour operators have been receiving calls nonstop from panicked clients looking to cancel or defer their plans.

"Already several bookings have been cancelled since Tuesday night," he said.

He pointed out that Kashmir was the top destination for most domestic travellers in the last few years during the summer holidays, with seven out of the 10 bookings being for the valley.

Shamim Shah, the chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir chapter of the Travel Agents Federation of India, said the ghastly incident "may have" an impact on tourism.

"It's true that such incidents instill fear among tourists, but we should not allow the perpetrators of such ghastly acts to succeed. Right now, we are not calculating our economic losses but want to console the tourists and stand by those who lost their loved ones," he told PTI.

Tourists enter Humayun Tomb amid tight security arrangements in view of Pahalgam terrorist attack, in New Delhi, on Wednesday
PHOTO: ANI

The attack in Baisaran meadow near Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district has sent shockwaves across the travel community. Among the dead were two foreign nationals from the UAE and Nepal, in addition to three tourists from West Bengal. Several others were injured.

Official figures show that Jammu and Kashmir recorded a historic footfall of 2.35 crore tourists in 2024, up from 2.11 crore in 2023 and 1.88 crore in 2022. This included both domestic travellers and pilgrims heading for the Amarnath Yatra and Vaishno Devi shrine, as well as about 65,000 foreign tourists.

Various economic surveys had hailed this consistent growth in tourism as a critical sign of "normalcy" returning to Jammu and Kashmir. The sector had benefited from better infrastructure, improved connectivity, and strong government-led promotional efforts.

But the Pahalgam attack may have jeopardised all of that.

"This will have significant ramifications," said Anil Punjabi, national committee member of the Travel Agents Federation of India.

Punjabi said there were bookings of around 300 people per day from West Bengal alone for the summer vacation period.

The attack has caused widespread panic across eastern India's tour and travel industry, especially in cities such as Kolkata and Siliguri which account for a significant portion of the Kashmir-bound tourists.

Agents in these cities said customers were not only cancelling Kashmir trips but also reconsidering bookings for the next season out of fear and uncertainty.

Kolkata-based tour operator Mrinmoy Chandra said he received cancellation requests from three groups within hours of the news breaking.

Chandra also warned that the attack would impact Kashmir's foreign tourism prospects.

The government, which had made significant strides in projecting Kashmir as a safe and attractive destination, now faces the challenge of reviving tourist confidence. But tour operators say all that progress could be reversed.

"There is fear again. Tourism was the biggest hope for economic recovery. This one attack has undone years of confidence-building," another tour operator and hotelier said.

"Tourism is not just a business there... it's a lifeline. And today, that lifeline is hanging by a thread," Punjabi said.

Security agencies have stepped up their presence in major tourist hubs. But tour operators believe the damage for the 2025 season may have already been done. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

84% of coral reefs hit by worst bleaching ever

Harmful bleaching of the world's coral has grown to include 84 per cent of the ocean's reefs in the most intense event of its kind in recorded history, the International Coral Reef Initiative announced Wednesday.

It's the fourth global bleaching event since 1998, and has now surpassed bleaching from 2014-17 that hit some two-thirds of reefs, said the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a mix of more than 100 governments, non-governmental organisations and others.

And it's not clear when the current crisis, which began in 2023 and is blamed on warming oceans, will end.

"We may never see the heat stress that causes bleaching dropping below the threshold that triggers a global event," said Mark Eakin, executive secretary for the International Coral Reef Society and retired coral monitoring chief for the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admini stration (NOAA).

"We're looking at something that's completely changing the face of our planet and the ability of our oceans to sustain lives and livelihoods," Eakin said.

Last year was Earth's hottest year on record, and much of that is going into oceans. The average annual sea surface temperature of oceans away from the poles was a record 20.87 degrees Celsius.

That's deadly to corals, which are key to seafood production, tourism and protecting coastlines from erosion and storms. Coral reefs are sometimes dubbed "rainforests of the sea" because they support high levels of biodiversity — approximately 25 per cent of all marine species can be found in, on and around coral reefs.

Coral get their bright colours from the colourful algae that live inside them and are a food source for the corals. Prolonged warmth causes the algae to release toxic compounds, and the coral eject them. A stark white skeleton is left behind, and the weakened coral is at heightened risk of dying.

The bleaching event has been so severe that NOAA's Coral Reef Watch programme has had to add levels to its bleaching alert scale to account for the growing risk of coral death.

Efforts are underway to conserve and restore coral. One Dutch lab has worked with coral fragments, including some taken from off the coast of the Seychelles, to propagate them in a zoo so that they might be used someday to repopulate wild coral reefs if needed.

Other projects, including one off Florida, have worked to rescue corals endangered by high heat and nurse them back to health before returning them to the ocean.

But scientists say it's essential to reduce emissions from the greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, that warm the planet.

"The best way to protect coral reefs is to address the root cause of climate change. And that means reducing the human emissions that are mostly from burning of fossil fuels... everything else is looking more like a Band-Aid rather than a solution," Eakin said.

"I think people really need to recognise what they're doing... inaction is the kiss of death for coral reefs," said Melanie McField, co-chair of the Caribbean Steering Committee for the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, a network of scientists that monitors reefs throughout the world.

The group's update comes as President Donald Trump has moved aggressively in his second term to boost fossil fuels and roll back clean energy programmes, which he says is necessary for economic growth.

"We've got a government right now that is working very hard to destroy all of these ecosystems ... removing these protections is going to have devastating consequences." *—PTI*

The bleaching event has been so severe that NOAA's Coral Reef Watch programme
PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

US urges India to drop non-tariff barriers: An explainer

The US has on multiple times raised concerns over certain non-tariff barriers being faced by American goods in the Indian markets.

On April 22 in Jaipur, US Vice President JD Vance urged India to drop non-tariff barriers, give greater access to its markets. Indian products too face these issues in the international markets including in America, EU, China, Japan, and Korea.

A list of Q&As (questions and answers) to explain these barriers and related issues:

Q. What are non-tariff barriers (NTBs) in the international trade parlance?
A. Non-tariff barriers are trade restrictions that do not involve tariffs (taxes or duties on imports or exports). These barriers impact the seamless movement of goods across global boundaries. It is essential to differentiate between non-tariff measures (NTMs) and NTBs.

Most NTMs are domestic rules created by countries with the aim to protect human, animal or plant health and the environment. NTM may be "Technical" measures like regulations, standards, testing, certification, pre-shipment inspection or "Non-Technical" measures like quotas, import licensing, subsidies, government procurement restrictions, etc. When NTMs become arbitrary, beyond scientific justification, they create hurdles for trade and are called NTBs.

Q: How NTBs affect exporters or importers?
A: These hurdles increase costs for traders. They may have to spend more to comply with destination country requirements such as mandatory certification, testing, or labelling. For example, an Indian agro product exporter might have to pay for EU-mandated laboratory tests for pesticide residues. Exporters sometimes need to redesign their products to meet technical standards or packaging rules in different countries.

It also causes delays in the arrival of consignments and heightens uncertainties. Complicated procedures to do paperwork, licensing rules, or inspections at borders can slow down shipments. For example, exporters to some African countries face long port delays due to strict verification checks.

Q: What kind of NTBs Indian exporters face?
A: Many of India's food and agriculture products face problems due to higher pesticide levels, presence of pests and contamination due to foot and mouth disease. These lead to rejection of export consignments and compulsory Inspections before shipment.

Q: What are the major categories of these barriers?
A: Complex and expensive prior registration: Under this, companies intending to export have to first register with destination country authorities. Registration, in most cases requires physical submission of documents and payment of exorbitant fee. For example, to ship industrial products to China, a firm needs to register its product with the specified Chinese authority. This requires submitting a large number of documents, including details about the firm and its products.

Unreasonable domestic standards/rules: If a country makes stringent standards and quality rules for foreign goods, it affects trade. For example, getting approval for exporting medicines to Japan is complex. Indian medicines must conform to Japanese pharmacopeia and registration takes a long time.

Q: What are the major NTBs flagged by the US?
A: According to the 2025 National Trade Estimate (NTE) Report on Foreign Trade Barriers of the US, India maintains various forms of non-tariff barriers such as banned or prohibited items that are denied entry into India (e.g., tallow, fat, and oils of animal origin); items that require a non-automatic import license (e.g., certain livestock products, pharmaceuticals, certain chemicals, certain IT products); and items that are importable only by government trading monopolies and are subject to cabinet approval regarding import timing and quantity (e.g., corn under a tariff-rate quota).

The report also stated that India imposes Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) such as mandatory quality control orders, and compulsory domestic testing and certification requirements for equipment.

For example, India imposes onerous requirements on dairy imports. India requires that dairy products intended for food be derived from animals that have not consumed feeds containing internal organs, blood meal, or tissues of ruminant or porcine origin and that exporting countries certify to these conditions, which lack a discernable animal health or human health justification.

Q: What barriers has the US raised in the services sectors in India?
A: According to the NTE, foreign investment in businesses in certain major services sectors, including financial services and retail, is subject to limitations on foreign equity, and foreign participation in professional services is significantly restricted.

In addition, barriers to digital trade and electronic commerce, such as those imposed on electronic payment providers, have secondary effects on a wide variety of services.

Q: What steps is India taking to help its exporters deal with NTBs?
A: The government raised these issues during bilateral meetings with respective nations. The department of commerce is developing a platform for registering non-tariff barriers faced by exporters and taking up with the concerned countries for their resolution. *—PTI*

US Vice President JD Vance recently urged India to drop non-tariff barriers
PHOTO: PTI

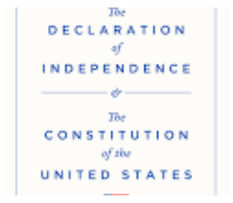


PHOTO: X

Publishers see rise in interest in US Constitution

NEW YORK, 23 APRIL

Sales of books related to Declaration of Independence and US constitution have doubled this year com-pared to the same season last year. According to Circana, around 162,000 combined copies have sold through mid-April, compared to 58,000 during the same time period the year before and around 33,000 in 2023. Sales were around 92,000 in the early months of Trump's first term, in 2017, more than double the pace of 2016. Shannon DeVito, Barnes & Noble's senior director of book strategy says, "This could be because next year marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence or the fast and furious current political conversations and policy changes." *—PTI*

Israeli Ministry deletes condolence message for Pope

JERUSALEM, 23 APRIL

The Israeli Foreign Ministry posted a condolence message on social media platform X mourning the death of Pope Francis, writing, 'Rest in peace, Pope Francis. May his memory be a blessing.' The post was swiftly deleted without explanation, sparking outrage among Israeli diplomats, particularly those in predominantly Catholic countries. Pope Francis was critical of Israel's actions in Gaza but also urged Hamas to release hostages and condemned antisemitism. His balanced approach made him a significant figure in the region. The deletion of the message has drawn scrutiny, especially in light of the Pope's strong ties to the Catholic Church in Holy Land. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is yet to comment on the Pope's demise. *—PTI*

Iraqis furious as Baghdad invites Syria to summit

BAGHDAD, 23 APRIL

An invitation to new Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa to attend the upcoming Arab League summit in Baghdad has sparked sharp political divisions in Iraq. Al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, once led al-Qaida-linked militants in Iraq, still faces an arrest warrant there. Now repositioned as a statesman after toppling Bashar Assad, his inclusion has drawn fierce opposition from Iran-aligned Shiite factions, many of whom fought alongside Assad. Meanwhile, Sunni politicians support the move, hailing it as a step towards regional diplomacy. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani confirmed the invitation following a quiet meeting in Qatar. Al-Sharaa has yet to confirm attendance to the summit. *—PTI*

Brazil SC charges Bolsonaro allies over coup plot

SAO PAULO, 23 APRIL

A panel of Brazil's Supreme Court justices unanimously accepted criminal charges on Tuesday against 6 more key allies of former President Jair Bolsonaro over an alleged coup attempt to keep him in power after his 2022 election defeat. Last month, the Court accepted charges against Bolsonaro and 7 close associates. Prosecutor-General Paulo Gonet divided the accused into 5 groups based on their roles. Bolsonaro and his closest allies were placed in the 'core group,' while the second group, reviewed on Tuesday, included individuals who coordinated actions to support the alleged coup including mobilising police, and monitoring authorities. Bolsonaro denies wrongdoing, claiming political persecution. His trial is expected in the coming months. *—PTI*

TRUMP SOFTENS ON CHINA TARIFFS

Says won't sack Federal Reserve boss

WASHINGTON, 23 APRIL

Much relief came to markets as US President Donald Trump signalled on Tuesday that tariffs against China may yet come down and that he had no plans to fire Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

Earlier, Trump had previously insinuated otherwise as he said he could fire Powell if he wanted to, being frustrated by the Fed putting a pause on cuts to short-term interest rates. His statement caused a stock market selloff.

"I have no intention of firing him," Trump told reporters at Oval office adding that tariffs on Chinese imports 'could come down substantially', but it won't be zero."

Powell has said that Trump's tariffs are creating uncertainty about slower growth and higher inflationary pressures. Trump maintains that inflationary worries are essentially non-existent and has tried to pressure the US central bank to lower interest rates.

Meanwhile, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a Tuesday speech that the ongoing tariffs showdown against China is unsustainable and expects a "de-escalation" in the trade war between the world's two largest economies.

- "I have no intention of firing him," Trump told reporters at Oval office adding that tariffs on Chinese imports 'could come down substantially', but it won't be zero.

Amidst anxieties over slower economic growth and higher inflationary pressures, the Trump administration has met for talks with Japan, India, South Korea, the European Union, Canada and Mexico, but is yet to start talks with China, which has insisted trade negotiations should be on 'equal terms.' *—PTI*

US Judge restores Voice of America

Washington, 23 April

A federal judge agreed Tuesday to block the Trump administration from dismantling Voice of America (VoA), the 83-year-old international news service created by Congress. Ordering to restore VoA and 2 other independent broadcast networks, Lamberth said the funding cuts "reflect a hasty, indiscriminate approach" particularly since they were made the same day that President Trump signed the congressional appropriation that funded Voice of America and the networks through September of this year. Not only is there an absence of "reasoned analysis" from the defendants, there is an absence of any analysis whatsoever," Lamberth said. *—PTI*

In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, a damaged bus that was hit by the Russian drone in Marhanets, Dnipropetrovsk region, Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Rubio stays out of London talks: Russia continues strikes

KYIV, 23 APRIL

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stayed away from the planned meeting on Wednesday between top US, UK, French and Ukrainian diplomats for a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine even as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ruled out ceding territory to Russia.

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy announced the talks in London would involve only lower-ranking officials after the Secretary of State Marco Rubio abruptly cancelled his visit raising doubts about the direction of the negotiations. Last week in Paris, US officials proposed allowing Russia to keep control of occupied Ukrainian territory as part of a deal, according to a European official familiar with the matter.

> **There is nothing to talk about - it is our land, the land of the Ukrainian people.**
>
> -Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

Zelenskyy pushed back against that during an appearance in Kyiv, calling it a 'non-starter' saying, "There is nothing to talk about - it is our land, the land of the Ukrainian people."

Meawhile, 40 people were injured in a Russian drone struck a bus carrying workers in Marganets, in eastern Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region on Wednesday morning, killing 7 women and 2 men, regional head Serhii Lysak wrote on his Telegram channel.

Some European allies are wary of the American proposal, but an official said some allies acknowledge that Russia wholly or partially controls 5 regions of Ukraine - Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

If the goal is to obtain a ceasefire immediately, "it should be based on the line of contact as it is," said a senior French official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Western analysts say Moscow is in no rush to conclude peace talks, because it has battlefield momentum and wants to capture more Ukrainian land. *—PTI*

Call for truce gets louder as Israel kills 23 in Gaza

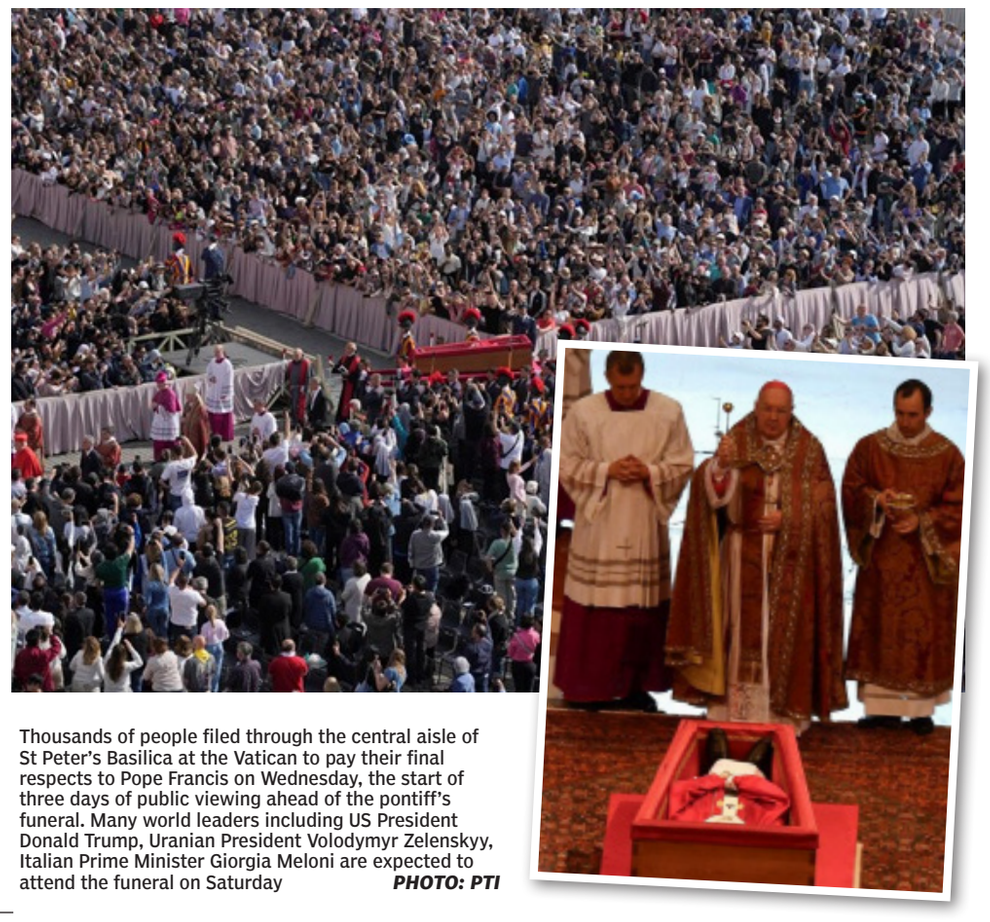
DEIR AL-BALAH, 23 APRIL

Calls for ceasefire became louder even as an Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City overnight killed at least 23 people, a health official said.

Arab mediators are working on a proposal to end the Israel–Hamas war that would include a 5-7-year truce and the release of all remaining hostages, officials said Wednesday. Egypt and Qatar are still developing the proposal, which would include the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the entire strip and the release of Palestinian prisoners, according to an Egyptian official and a Hamas official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Israel ended a ceasefire with Hamas last month and has vowed to continue the war until all hostages are returned. Hamas has said it will only release the dozens of hostages it still holds in return for Palestinian prisoners, a complete Israeli withdrawal and a lasting ceasefire, A Hamas delegation arrived in Cairo on Tuesday to discuss the evolving proposal. *—PTI*

A Palestinian woman inspects damage after an Israeli army airstrike on Yaffa school in Gaza city on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*



Thousands of people filed through the central aisle of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican to pay their final respects to Pope Francis on Wednesday, the start of three days of public viewing ahead of the pontiff's funeral. Many world leaders including US President Donald Trump, Uranian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni are expected to attend the funeral on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Thousands pay their respects to Pope Francis

VATICAN CITY, 23 APRIL

The Vatican opened St Peter's Basilica to the general public Wednesday to pay their final respects to Pope Francis, with thousands of people filling the central aisle and Swiss Guards standing at attention.

Francis' body will lie in state in the basilica until Saturday's funeral and burial.

The public mourning period began at 11 am after Francis' casket was transported from the Vatican hotel where he lived to the basilica.

Meawnhile, US President Donald Trump is planning to leave Washington on Friday morning to fly to Rome for Pope Francis' funeral services. He'll return Saturday evening, once services are over. Francis died on Monday at age 88. *—PTI*

Houthis target northern Israel in rare attack

DUBAI, 23 APRIL

Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a missile towards northern Israel on Wednesday morning, a rare target for the group, retaliating to intense US airstrike campaign pounded them.

The Houthis separately claimed shooting down another MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen.

Sirens sounded in Haifa, Krayot and other areas west of the Sea of Galilee, the Israeli military said. "An interceptor was launched toward the missile, and the missile was most likely successfully intercepted," it said. Those in the area could hear booms in the predawn darkness.

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, though it can take them hours or even days to acknowledge their assaults.

American airstrikes, meanwhile, continued targeting the Houthis on Wednesday morning, part of a campaign that began on 15 March. The Houthis reported strikes on Hodeida, Marib and Saada governorates.

In Marib, the Houthis described a strike hitting telecommunication equipment,

The Houthis have stepped up their targeting of American drones flying over the country. On Tuesday evening, Houthi military spokesman Brig Gen Yahya Saree said the rebels shot down an MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen's Hajjah governorate. *—PTI*

China space station to get 3 astronauts

BEIJING, 23 APRIL

China will launch 3 astronauts to its space station on Thursday, coinciding with its 10th Space Day to replace their colleagues manning the station for the past six months, it announced on Wednesday.

The Shenzhou-20 crewed spaceship will be launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre will have 3 chinese astronauts conducting new life science experiments, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) spokesman Lin Xiqiang as saying.

These experiments will mark China's first space-based investigation into the regeneration of organs, Lin said. *—PTI*

Wild fire continues to rage as the New Jersey Air National Guard works to douse the blaze on the Warren Grove Air to Ground Range in Bass River Twp, Burlington County on Wednesday *PHOTO: X @NJDEPFORESTFIRE*

Thousands evacuated in US wildfire

BARNEGAT TOWNSHIP, 23 APRIL

A fast-moving wildfire in New Jersey has forced the evacuation of thousands and closed a major section of the Garden State Parkway, one of the state's busiest motorways. The blaze, which broke out in the Greenwood Forest Wildlife Management Area, has already scorched over 34 sq km of land. Fire officials reported that the fire was only 10 per cent contained by Tuesday evening.

More than 1,300 structures are under threat, and around 3,000 residents have been evacuated. Shelters were opened at two local high schools, according to Barnegat Police. Jersey Central Power and Light Company cut electricity to approximately 25,000 customers, including many in Barnegat Township, at the request of the fire command to protect emergency crews. Power is not expected to be restored before Wednesday.

No injuries have been reported so far. The cause of the fire remains under investigation. Local resident Debi Schaffer evacuated with her two dogs, while her husband stayed behind with their 22 chickens. 'I wanted to take them with me; can you imagine 22 chickens in a car?' she told The Press of Atlantic City, describing her neighbourhood as 'like a war zone.'

This is the second major wildfire to strike the region in under a week. *—PTI*

AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

International students' visa cases pile up in US courts

ATLANTA, 23 APRIL

At least 1,100 students at 174 colleges have had their visas revoked since late March, according to an Associated Press review.

In a lawsuit on visas, filed Monday by 4 people at the University of Iowa, attorneys detail their traumatic experiences. One graduate student from India, "cannot sleep and is having difficulty breathing and eating." He has stopped doing research or working as a teaching assistant.

Anjan Roy, from Bangladesh, from Missouri State University got an email that his legal status as an international student had been terminated, and he was suddenly at risk for deportation.

"I was in literal shock, like, what the hell is this?" said Roy, a graduate student in computer science. At first, he avoided going out in public, skipping classes and mostly keeping his phone turned off. A court ruling in his favour led to his status being restored this week, and he has returned to his apartment, but is still asking his roommates to screen visitors.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

For, 133 plaintiffs, judges have issued temporary restraining orders but denied similar requests in other cases, saying it was not clear the loss of status caused irreparable harm. An attorney for the government, David Powell, argued the students did not suffer significant harm because they could transfer their academic credits or find jobs in another country.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last month the State Department was revoking visas of those who were acting against national interests, protested Israel-Gaza war or faced criminal charges. But for many affected students it's unclear altogether why they were targeted. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 25P to settle at 85.44 against USD

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

The rupee depreciated 25 paise and settled for the day at 85.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on surge in crude oil prices and importer demand for the American currency. Forex traders said the American currency recovered, supported by Donald Trump's softened stance -- particularly towards the Federal Reserve and China. However, positive domestic markets and weak US dollar index and foreign fund inflows supported the domestic unit at lower levels. Forex traders said the market found support after Trump on Tuesday backed off from threats to fire FED Chair Jerome Powell after days of intensifying criticism against him for not cutting rates. Trump also signaled the possibility of lower tariffs against China. *—PTI*

USFDA approves Eugia Pharma's blood cancer drug

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Aurobindo Pharma on Wednesday said its wholly-owned arm Eugia Pharma Specialities Ltd has received final approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to manufacture and market its generic version of Dasatinib tablets indicated in certain types of cancer of bone marrow and blood. USFDA's approval is required for manufacturing and marketing of Dasatinib tablets of different strengths. Dasatinib tablets are bioequivalent and therapeutically equivalent to the reference listed Bristol-Myers Squibb Company's drug, Sprycel Tablets in the same strengths. The product, which is expected to be launched in Q1FY26, has an estimated market size of USD 1.8 billion for 12 months ended February 2025. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X

Ather Energy sets IPO price band at ₹304–321/share

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy Ltd has fixed a price band of Rs 304 to Rs 321 a piece for its Rs 2,981 crore initial public offering (IPO). The issue will be open for public subscription from 28 April to 30, while bidding for anchor investors will open on 25 April. The IPO will be a combination of fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 2,626 crore, and an offer-for-sale of 1.1 crore equity shares by promoters and shareholders. 75 per cent of the issue has been reserved for qualified institutional buyers, 15 per cent for non-institutional investors and 10 per cent for retail investors. Its equity shares will list on the stock exchanges on 6 May. *—PTI*

12% safeguard duty to curb influx of steel import: ISA

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The government's decision to impose a 12 per cent provisional safeguard duty on imported flat steel products will help curb "the influx of cheap imports, primarily from China, South Korea, and Japan", the Indian Steel Association (ISA) said. These countries contributed around 78 per cent to the overall imports in FY25. Indian imports of finished steel reached 9.5 million metric tonnes in 2024-25. The Directorate General of Trade Remedies recommended this duty following an investigation that revealed that the sharp increase in imports of non-alloy and alloy steel flat products harmed domestic producers. The provisional safeguard duty has been imposed for 200 days on five steel product categories, including hot rolled coils, sheets and plates.*—PTI*

EU fines Apple $500M, Meta $200M over competition law

LONDON, 23 APRIL

European Union watchdogs fined Apple and Meta hundreds of millions of Euros Wednesday as they stepped up enforcement of the 27-nation bloc's digital competition rules.

The European Commission imposed a 500 million Euro (USD 571 million) fine on Apple for preventing app makers from pointing users to cheaper options outside its App Store.

The commission, which is the EU's executive arm, also fined Meta Platforms 200 million Euros because it forced Facebook and Instagram users to choose between seeing ads or paying to avoid them.

The punishments were smaller than the blockbuster multibillion-Euro fines that the commission has previously slapped on Big Tech companies in antitrust cases.

The decisions were expected to come in March, but officials apparently held off amid an escalating trans-Atlantic trade war with US President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly complained about regulations from Brussels affecting American companies.

- The decisions were expected to come in March, but officials apparently held off amid an escalating trans-Atlantic trade war with US

The penalties were issued under the EU's Digital Markets Act, also known as the DMA, a rulebook with set of do's and don'ts designed to give consumers and businesses more choice and protect Big Tech "gatekeepers" from digital markets.

The DMA seeks to ensure "that citizens have full control over when and how their data is used online, and businesses can freely communicate with their own customers," Henna Virkkunen, the commission's executive vice-president for tech sovereignty, said in a statement.

Apple accused the commission of "unfairly targeting" the iPhone maker, saying it has "spent hundreds of thousands of engineering hours and made dozens of changes to comply with this law." *—PTI*

Growth forecast lowered to 6.3%

IMF cuts GDP forecast to 6.2% from 6.5%

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

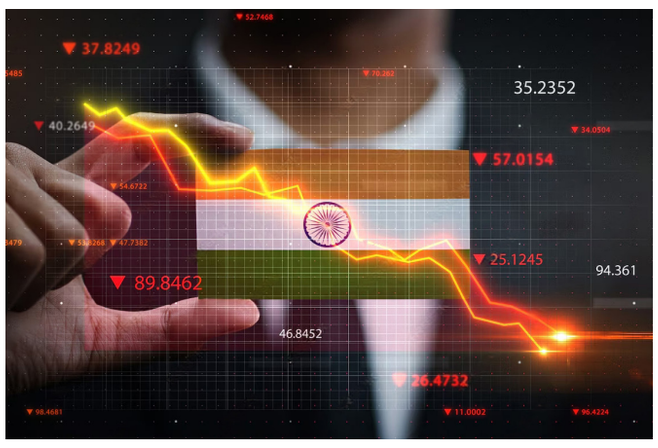


PHOTO:FREEPIK

The World Bank on Wednesday lowered India's growth forecast for the current fiscal by 4 per cent points to 6.3 per cent amid global economic weakness and policy uncertainty.

In its previous estimate, the World Bank had projected India's growth at 6.7 per cent for the fiscal year 2025-26.

In India, growth in FY24/25 disappointed because of slower growth in private investment and public capital expenditures that did not meet government targets, the World Bank said in its twice-yearly regional outlook.

On Tuesday, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also lowered India's GDP forecast for the current fiscal to 6.2 per cent from its January estimates of 6.5 per cent.

The World Bank report said the benefits to private investment from monetary easing and regulatory streamlining are expected to be offset by global economic weakness and policy uncertainty.

The Washington-headquartered multilateral agency has projected regional growth to slow to 5.8 per cent in 2025, 0.4 percentage points below October projections before ticking up to 6.1 per cent in 2026.

In Bangladesh, the report said the growth is expected to slow in FY24/25 to 3.3 per cent amid political uncertainty and persistent financial challenges, and the growth rebound in FY25/26 has been downgraded to 4.9 per cent.

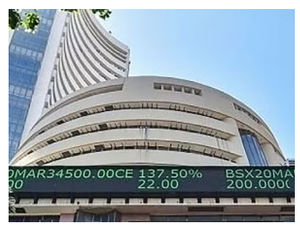
For Pakistan, the World Bank said its economy continues to recover from a combination of natural disasters, external pressures, and inflation, and is expected to grow by 2.7 per cent in FY24/25 and 3.1 per cent in FY25/26.

In Sri Lanka, the government has made further progress with debt restructuring, and a projected rebound in investment and external demand is expected to lift growth in 2025 to 3.5 per cent before it returns to 3.1 per cent in 2026. *—PTI*

WEEKLONG SURGE

Sensex crosses 80,000 for the first time in 4 months

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL



Stock markets extended the winning run to seventh day on Wednesday with benchmark BSE Sensex jumping 520 points to close above 80,000 level for the first time in four months driven by strong gains in IT and auto shares.

The 30-share Sensex rose by 520.90 points or 0.65 per cent to settle at 80,116.49, the highest closing level since December 18. During the day, it surged 658.96 points or 0.82 per cent to 80,254.55.

The NSE Nifty rallied 161.70 points or 0.67 per cent to 24,328.95.

Foreign fund inflows and positive global trends also boosted the market sentiment, analysts said.

Among the Sensex firms, HCL Tech surged the most by 7.72 per cent after the firm posted an 8.1 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 4,307 crore for March quarter 2024-25, mainly on account of large deals with a total contract value of about Rs 25,500 crore.

Tech Mahindra, Tata Motors, Infosys, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel and Maruti were also among major gainers.

Banking shares witnessed a sell-off after recent sharp gains with leading private lender HDFC Bank dropping by 1.98 per cent to emerge as the biggest loser among Sensex shares.

Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, ITC and UltraTech Cement were also among the laggards. *—PTI*

HCL shares jump over 7% post Q4 gains

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Shares of HCL Technologies on Wednesday surged over seven per cent after the firm posted an 8.1 per cent increase in consolidated net profit for the January-March quarter of 2024-25. The stock jumped 7.42 per cent to Rs 1,589.95 on the BSE. At the NSE, shares of the firm rallied 7.43 per cent to Rs 1,590 apiece. The stock emerged as the biggest gainer among the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty firms during morning trade. HCL had logged a profit of Rs 3,986 crore for the same period a year ago, it said. *– PTI*

Gensol shares' fall continues, prices drop by 5%

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Shares of Gensol Engineering dropped five per cent to hit fresh lower circuit limit on Wednesday, as investors stayed away from the counter amid the ongoing crisis at the firm.

Sebi, through its interim order on Tuesday last week, barred brothers Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi from accessing the securities markets until further notice. The action comes amid accusations of siphoning off loan funds from their publicly listed company for personal use, raising concerns over corporate governance and financial misconduct. The stock tumbled 5 per cent to Rs 100.80 -- its lowest trading permissible limit as well as 52-week low level -- on the BSE. Shares of the firm tanked 5 per cent to Rs 99.91 -- the lower circuit as well as 52-week low level -- on the NSE. From its 52-week high of Rs 1,125.75, the stock has tumbled 91 per cent. The stock has been tumbling for the past 10 trading days. *– PTI*

Gold price surge may hit demand: Experts

MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

High gold prices, which crossed Rs 1 lakh per 10g in spot markets, are likely to hit demand in the short term but the market sentiment remains positive due to upcoming key events like Akshya Tritiya and ongoing marriage season buying, say experts..

Gold price of 24-karat variety (999 fineness) traded at Rs 101,350 per 10g in the Mumbai bullion market while 22 karat gold was quoted at Rs 92,900 per 10g on Tuesday.

"The sudden rise in gold price will definitely have an impact on demand, however, when the shock gets absorbed then the demand will stabilise. Overall there is a positive sentiment in the market and we expect good consumer demand following the upcoming Akshya Tritiya and the ongoing wedding season," All India Gem And Jewellery Domestic Council chairman Rajesh Rokde told PTI.

He said, this can be analysed by imports data of 2023 and 2024.

PN Gadgil Jewellers chairman Saurabh Gadgil said that there is a lot of optimism in the market and that there are also expectations that the gold prices will rise further in the future.

Additionally, weakness in the US dollar and uncertainties around the US-China trade war are other crucial factors that have pushed gold prices to a record high.

"While the investors will make the most out of this price hike to invest in gold to provide a hedge to their portfolio against inflation, the consumer sentiment is bound to take a hit following this upward price trajectory. However, this will be gradually absorbed by the domestic buyers in the long run," Shah added. *—PTI*

Govt plans ₹14K cr projects in four states

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

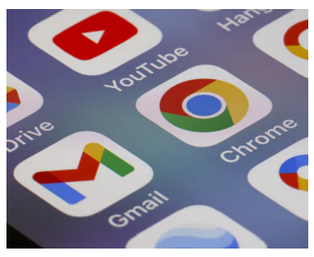
The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), which is responsible for fostering industrial growth and internal trade, has reviewed mega infrastructure projects in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Uttarakhand. The total cost of these projects exceeds Rs 14,096 crore, said the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in a release.

DPIIT Secretary Amardeep Bhatia chaired a high-level meeting to review 19 issues across 17 significant mega infrastructure projects. The review meeting, conducted under the aegis of the Project Monitoring Group (PMG), was attended by senior officials from central ministries, state governments, and project proponents. The discussions focused on fast-tracking resolution of implementation challenges through enhanced inter-ministerial and inter-state coordination.

Among the reviewed projects was the Rs 3,164.72 crore four-laning of the Jaunpur-Akbarpur road, crucial for improving regional connectivity. *—ANI*

OpenAI interested in buying Chrome if Google sells it

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL



Amid the ongoing lawsuit, ChatGPT maker OpenAI has shown its interest in buying Chrome in case Google is forced to sell it. Google is currently facing a search engine monopoly lawsuit against the US government. OpenAI plans to make it an "AI-first" experience. This means that the user data that is flowing to the Chrome's owner could help train agentic AI models, which can operate browsers on behalf of its user. If Google loses the trial, it will be forced to sell Chrome. The US is focusing on breaking up the tech giant, arguing that Google has too much dominance over the online search market. OpenAI has stated that if an opportunity arises where Chome is being sold, it would take it up happily. Meanwhile, It is not clear whether Google will sell Chrome or not. OpenAI had reached out to Google for a partnership offer, where ChatGPT would be allowed to use Google's search tech.

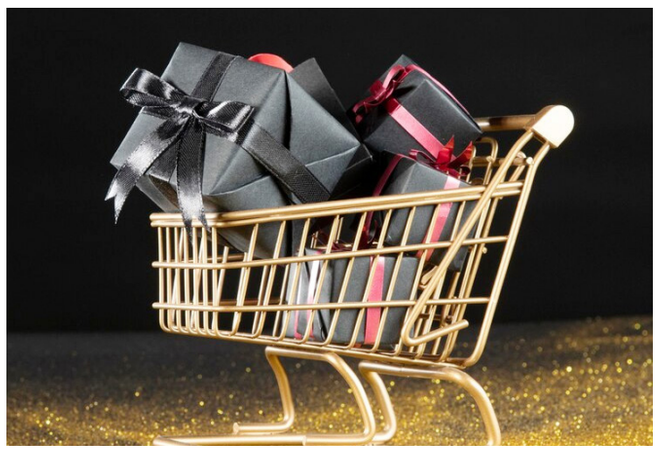
The offer was turned down. ChatGPT is currently using Microsoft's Bing search tool as its search technology. By acquiring Chrome, OpenAI will be combining the powers of two tech giants. The company will be getting a large audience.

—Agencies

TAXING THE SPLURGE

Luxury goods above ₹10L to attract 1% TCS

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL



Handbags, wrist watches, footwear and sportswear, priced above Rs 10 lakh will now attract one per cent Tax Collected at Source (TCS), as per a notification issued by the Income Tax department.

TCS at one per cent rate is currently being levied on motor vehicles costing above Rs 10 lakh effective 1 January, 2025.

The Income Tax department on 22 April notified the list of specified luxury goods and collectibles on which one per cent TCS will apply henceforth.

TCS does not garner any additional revenue, but helps the tax department to trace high value spending as PAN details have to be submitted at the time of purchase.

TCS is collected from the buyer at the time of sale of specified goods and can be adjusted against the tax liability of the purchaser at the time of filing of I-T returns.

The obligation to collect TCS shall be on the seller in respect of the notified goods. The list includes items such as wrist watches, art objects such as paintings, sculptures, and antiques, collectible items including coins and stamps, yachts, helicopters, luxury handbags, sunglasses, footwear, high-end sportswear and equipment, home theatre systems, and horses intended for racing or polo.

- The Income Tax department on 22 April notified the list of specified luxury goods and collectibles on which one per cent TCS will apply henceforth

AKM Global Tax Partner Amit Maheshwari said by bringing high-value items into the TCS framework with a 1 per cent rate, the government is widening the tax net beyond just motor vehicles. "This will enhance the traceability of luxury spending." *—PTI*

CIABC for global promo of India's Mahua, Feni

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Industry (CIABC) on Wednesday urged the government to introduce uniform taxation for the sector and allow promotion of heritage spirits such as Mahua and Feni globally, saying that such reforms are vital to boost exports and help Indian brands compete internationally.

Deepak Roy
PHOTO: X/CIABC

Deepak Roy, the CIABC chairman, also said the government should allow the industry to communicate freely with its consumers. With the government's help, Indian heritage spirits can be promoted in international markets, as they have great potential, he said.

Roy was speaking at the AlcoBev India 2025, the industry conclave organised by CIABC here.

"One segment that can realise it is the Indian heritage spirits. When Tequila can be synonymous with Mexico, Sake with Japan and Soju with Korea, the same we can achieve internationally with Feni or Mahua, which have a rich cultural legacy. We need to get out of the old mindset and promote Indian heritage spirits," he said, adding that different taxation levels in states are a big challenge for the industry.

"There is no cohesive strategy for the Indian alcoholic beverage industry. The industry needs a uniform taxation mechanism which will propel the growth," he added. *—PTI*

RCB eye home improvement against RR

RCB currently have 10 points and are placed at third on the table

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Struggling to find form in their den, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to regain control of their IPL campaign at home when they meet a floundering Rajasthan Royals here on Thursday.

RCB's three defeats at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in as many matches offer one of the biggest paradoxes of this edition. An outfit with steamrolled opposition in all parts of the country has been left chasing shadows in their backyard.

he Bengaluru batters are yet to find the right tempo to tide over the slowness in the pitch, as they seem to have been caught in the dilemma of whether to step on the gas or not.

Their mainstay, Virat Kohli, has been in decent form this season, averaging 64, but more would be expected of Phil Salt, Devdutt Padikkal, and skipper Rajat Patidar.

The inconsistent bounce is holding back the RCB batters, particularly after the Power Play segment, and hopefully, they will find the rhythm against RR.

RCB currently have 10 points to be placed at third on the table but Punjab Kings and Lucknow Super Giants also have 10 points. *—PTI*

Virat Kohli and team during a practice session **PHOTO: PTI**

Rahul has left last season's baggage, it will help him do well for DC

-Cheteshwar Pujara, Indian batsman

Plan is to play for India, but current focus is to win IPL with Delhi Capital

-Abishek Porel, Delhi Capitals opener

RCB VS RR

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	33
RCB Won:	16
RR Won:	14
NO RESULT	3

RCB vs RR Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

HOME ADVANTAGE IS NOT PREVALENT: RAHUL DRAVID

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Rajasthan Royals head coach Rahul Dravid on Wednesday cited cases of players joining new franchises and consequent lack of familiarity with the conditions as a plausible reason for teams complaining about the lack of home advantage in this IPL. Several teams, such as Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Chennai Super Kings, Lucknow Super Giants, and Kolkata Knight Riders, had expressed unhappiness about the nature of pitches at their respective home venues."I think it depends from ground to ground. I'm not sure what specific franchises might have wanted from their curators, so to speak, but home advantage, generally, the teams are new as well right after a big auction," Dravid said on the eve of RR's match here against RCB. Dravid then validated his arguments by giving the examples of players like RR's Nitish Rana and RCB's Phil Salt, who joined those teams after last year's mega auction."It's the first year after a big auction, so for a lot of the players as well, even though they may be your home players, they are playing for those teams or those grounds for the first time. *—PTI*

DP World India C'ship joins 2025 Race to Dubai

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Global smart logistics provider DP World and the DP World Tour have launched the DP World India Championship, a new USD4 million tournament, which will be the largest prize-fund event to be held in the country. The event, co-sanctioned with the Professional Golf Tour of India, will take place at the Delhi Golf Club from 16-19 October. The championship will be the eighth of nine events in the 'Back 9' phase of the 2025 Race to Dubai, building towards the season-ending DP World Tour Playoffs and culminating in the DP World Tour Championship at Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai.*—PTI*

PSG held by Nantes, remain unbeaten in Ligue

LONDON, 23 APRIL

Paris Saint-Germain extended their unbeaten run in Ligue 1 after a 1-1 draw against Nantes on Tuesday in a rescheduled league fixture. Despite already clinching their fourth straight French league title, the result keeps PSG on course to complete an entire Ligue 1 season without defeat unprecedented achievement in French football. Vitinha gave the visitors the lead in the first half, and it appeared enough to secure all three points at the Stade de la Beaujoire. *—PTI*

15 selected for NCOEs from ASMITA sub-junior hockey

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Five under-16 girls from Mizoram are among the 15 hockey players selected by the Sports Authority of India to be inducted into the various National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs). Seen as the building block for women's hockey in India, the girls have been chosen after the conclusion of the 2024-25 season of the ASMITA league matches. The 15 selected for training at the NCOEs include three players from Haryana and two each from Jharkhand and Odisha, besides girls from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Piyush Dubey, hockey's High Performance Director for SAI and Khelo India, said these girls have been chosen keeping the future Olympics in mind. "We have to think of a pathway, and these girls have the potential to make it to the senior national team.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Andre Agassi to play at US Open Pickleball C'ships

DUBAI, 23 APRIL

Andre Agassi collected two of his eight Grand Slam tennis titles at the U.S. Open and now he'll be competing at a different racket event with that name. Agassi, who retired from professional tennis in 2006 after playing his last match at Flushing Meadows, will line up alongside teenager Anna Leigh Waters in the mixed pro division at the U.S. Open Pickleball Championships next week in Naples, Florida.Agassi, who turns 55 next week, has participated in made-for-TV pickleball exhibitions with other former tennis players and can be seen pitching pickleball equipment via social media. This will be his first professional pickleball appearance.He won the U.S. Open tennis championship in 1994 and 1999, completed a career Grand Slam by winning at least one championship at each of that sport's majors*—PTI*

Humpy wins FIDE Women's GP chess meet

PUNE, 23 APRIL

Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy won the FIDE Women's Grand Prix 2024-25 (Pune leg) title based on her superior tie-breaks over Zhu Jiner of China after the two players were tied for the top spot here on Wednesday.

Humpy, who regained the women's World Rapid Chess Championship after a gap of five years in New York in December last, beat Bulgarian player Nurgyul Salimova in the ninth and final round game to end on seven points, the same as Jiner who beat Russia's Polina Shuvalova.

"Humpy Koneru and Zhu Jiner both won their final round games and ended the FIDE Women's Grand Prix tied for first, but it's Humpy who takes the top spot thanks to superior tiebreaks!" wrote FIDE on 'X'.

On Tuesday, the penultimate round of the tournament, the duo were tied on six points. Humpy had survived a scare to hold Alina Kashlinskaya to a draw, while Jiner defeated India's Divya Deshmukh in a tactical battle in the sixth round. *—PTI*

Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy **PHOTO: PTI**

MINORITY OWNERSHIP PARTNER

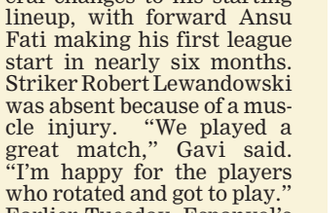
ECB should offer BCCI 'The Hundred' to attract Indian players: Daniel

LONDON, 23 APRIL

The England and Wales Cricket Board should bring on board the BCCI as a "minority ownership partner" of The Hundred in order to attract Indian players to the tournament, Lancashire CEO Daniel Gidney has said, according to a report.

Even though Indian men's players are not issued 'No Objection Certificates' to play outside the IPL, the T20 league owners have expanded their footprint across the globe, and have stakes in SA20 (South Africa), ILT20 (UAE), and Major League Cricket (USA). According to ESPNCricinfo, Gidney believes "aligning interests" would be the way to bring Indian players to compete in The Hundred."

I think it's possible. If I were the ECB, I'd be talking about perhaps bringing the BCCI in as a minority ownership partner in the tournament as a whole. If you do that, then you are aligning interests," he said.



Lancashire CEO Daniel Gidney **PHOTO: X**

While Indian men's players feature only in the IPL, the country's women cricketers, including captain Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana, have featured in England's The Hundred and Australia's Women's Big Bash League."That is probably your best chance of getting (Indian) players in The Hundred.

It comes down to the will, and the individuals on both sides," Gidney said."The BCCI has been successful with protecting their brand and by making sure they don't plan any T20 tournaments anywhere in the world. *—PTI*

FIA president picks a longtime Ford partner for top sports role

PARIS, 23 APRIL

FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem has picked a longtime partner of Ford to be the auto racing body's new deputy president for sport after the previous official resigned in protest at how the organization is run.

The FIA said Wednesday that Ben Sulayem had nominated Malcolm Wilson, whose company M-Sport has operated Ford's team in the World Rally Championship since 1997. The appointment needs to be confirmed by FIA member organizations in June.

Wilson's appointment comes at a time when Ford is preparing to return to Formula 1 next year as a partner in Red Bull's engine production.

The FIA, which oversees series including F1 and rallying, was shaken this month when Robert Reid, Ben Sulayem's former running mate, resigned as deputy president for sport. The position is a key role in developing FIA policy on sports events. *—PTI*

Los Angeles Lakers level series

NEW YORK, 23 APRIL

Luka Doncic scored 31 points and LeBron James added 21 as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 94-85 to level their NBA Western Conference playoff series at one game apiece on Tuesday.

Slovenian star Doncic, acquired in a blockbuster February trade, also had 12 rebounds and nine assists for the Lakers, who led by as many as 22 and held on late in a bruising clash.

The Lakers bounced back from a blowout loss on their home floor, while elsewhere the Indiana Pacers and Oklahoma City Thunder seized 2-0 leads in their best-of-seven first-round series. *—PTI*

Zimbabwe beats B'desh

SYLHET, 23 APRIL

Fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani claimed 6-72 and opener Brian Bennet scored 54 as Zimbabwe beat Bangladesh by three wickets in the first cricket test on Wednesday.

Offspinner Mehidy Hasan gave Bangladesh an outside chance at victory by taking 5-50 on day four, but Zimbabwe's batters held their nerve to reach 174-7 for their first test victory since 2021.Bangladesh was dismissed for 255, adding just 61 to their overnight 194-4, after Muzarabani hastened the collapse by becoming the joint-fastest to 50 test wickets for his country. Zimbabwe appeared set for a comfortable victory by racing to 95 in the 21st over without losing a wicket as it chased a modest target of 174. *—PTI*

Barcelona beat Mallorca 1-0 on Dani's goal

MADRID, 23 APRIL

Dani Olmo scored early in the second half as Barcelona defeated Mallorca 1-0 to increase its Spanish league lead on Tuesday.

The home win gave the Catalan club a seven-point lead over Real Madrid, which visits Getafe on Wednesday. Barcelona, seeking its first league title since 2023, has five league games left.

Olmo's winner came a minute into the second half at the Montjuic stadium, with the playmaker finding the net from inside the area.

It was the third consecutive victory for Barcelona in the league. The Catalan side had 40 attempts on goal, while Mallorca had only four, none on target.

"We created many scoring opportunities and we should have taken advantage of them, but that's soccer," Barcelona midfielder Gavi said.

"We can't always score easily. We insisted until we finally scored, and that's what's important."

Mallorca, which has only two wins from its last nine matches, stayed in seventh place.

Barcelona and Madrid will meet in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday in Seville.

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick made several changes to his starting lineup, with forward Ansu Fati making his first league start in nearly six months. Striker Robert Lewandowski was absent because of a muscle injury. "We played a great match," Gavi said. "I'm happy for the players who rotated and got to play." Earlier Tuesday, Espanyol's three-game winning streak ended with a 1-1 draw at Valencia, which has drawn two in a row after three straight victories. *—PTI*

Nunes dramatic late winner takes Man City 3rd

LONDON, 23 APRIL

On the touchline, a picture of two managers with high, contrasting emotions coursing through them after Matheus Nunes's 94th-minute winner. For Manchester City, Pep showed sheer delight at a late, late victory that lifts them to third on 61 points, four ahead of Chelsea in sixth. Across from him, Unai Emery felt despair as Aston Villa were down in seventh, the Spaniard's next job to lift his men for their FA Cup semi-final against Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Nunes's far-post strike from Jérémy Doku's cross from the left also disappointed Forest, Newcastle United, and Chelsea in the race for the top-five berth that secures a Champions League place. *—PTI*

PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK

Indian athletes condemn, some demand end of sporting ties with Pak

NEW DELHI, 23 JAN

India's sporting fraternity oscillated between grief and rage as it joined the nation in condemning the deadly terrorist attack in Pahalgam, with some demanding that the country should cut all sports ties with Pakistan.

On Tuesday, terrorists opened fire at a prime tourist location in south Kashmir's Pahalgam, killing at least 26 civilians and injuring several others. The Resistance Front (TRF), a shadow group of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli expressed shock as they mourned the loss of lives.

"The affected families must be going through an unimaginable ordeal - India and the world stand united with them at this dark hour, as we mourn the loss of lives and pray for justice," Tendulkar wrote.

"Heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. Praying for peace and strength to families of all those who lost their lives and justice to be served for their cruel act," Kohli posted on his Instagram.

Similar sentiments were expressed by other top players such as Jasprit Bumrah and Suryakumar Yadav. Pacer Mohammed Siraj posted an emotional message in which he called for justice.

No cause, no belief, no ideology can ever justify such a monstrous act. Yeh kaisi ladai hai... jahaan insaan ki jaan ki koi keemat hi nahi (what sort of a fight is this in which there is no value for human life)," he asked. While India has not played bilateral cricket with Pakistan since 2012–13, and the BCCI declined to send its team for the Champions Trophy earlier this year, other Indian teams have continued to travel to Pakistan for international events.

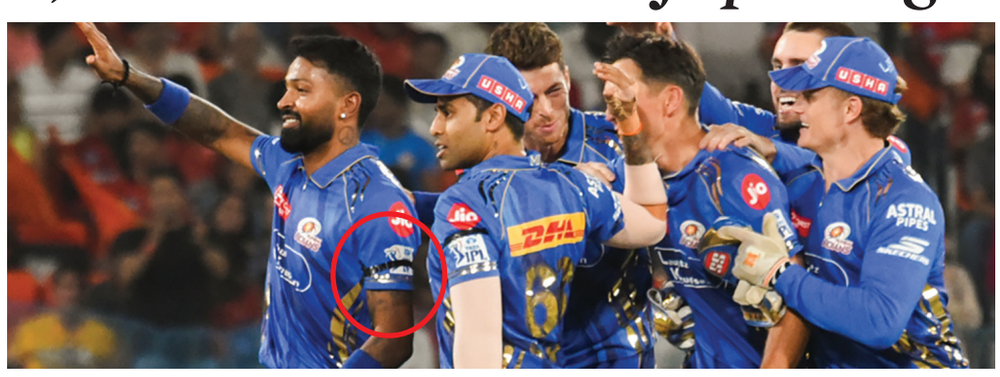
Two-time Olympic medal-winning badminton player PV Sindhu also penned down an emotional post.

Olympic gold medallist duo of javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and Abhinav Bindra prayed for the victims.

"Heartbroken by the tragic attack in Jammu & Kashmir. Prayers for the victims and their families," Chopra wrote.

The attack is the deadliest terrorist act in the valley since the 2019 Pulwama strike.

Olympic medal-winning former hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, shuttler Saina Nehwal, and two-time world champion boxer Nikhat Zareen also called for justice. *—PTI*



Indian players wearing black armbands **PHOTO: PTI**